

SEPTEMBER 1910

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—THE—  
**RED BOOK**  
MAGAZINE



**THE WOMAN IN THE CASE**

Read "The Great Too Much" in this Issue.

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# THE RED BOOK

## MAGAZINE

EDITED BY KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN

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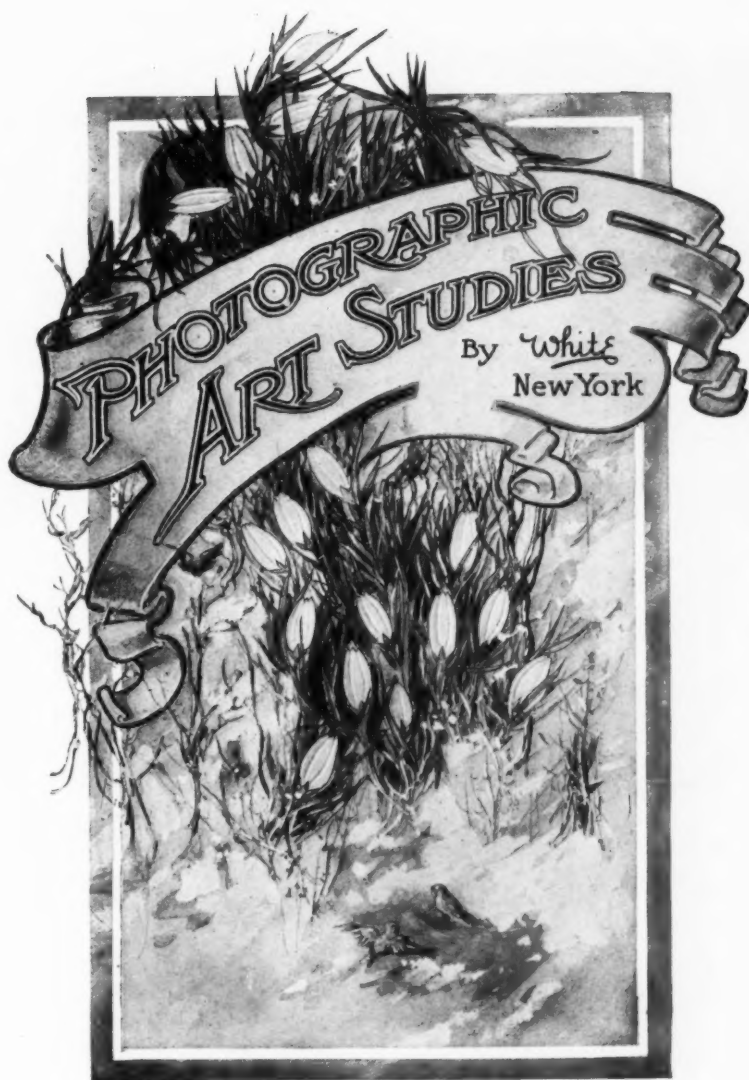
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Wise Mrs. Severn took nerseif beyond sight and hearing

To accompany "The Great Too Much"—page 878



# THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XV. September 1910 No. 5

## Jacques Bernard

BY NEVIL G. HENSHAW

Author of "Aline of The Grand Woods"

ILLUSTRATIONS BY P. V. E. IVORY



HE naturalist looked at the wings intently, his face aglow with surprise and interest. Then he uttered a strange, scientific name, smiting his knee in his excitement.

"And you say that you killed it near here, in the sea marsh?" he asked.

Jacques Bernard nodded.

"Yes, M'sieu," he replied. "But that was many years ago. Now one never sees them. It is what we call the *bête croche* on account of its long, curved bill. In appearance it is very like a huge snipe."

The hunter paused at the look of disappointment that came into his listener's face. He was a broad, strong man, brown and hairy, and in his clear, blue eyes there shone that joy of living which comes only to those who live in the open.

As he spoke he stood within the little cabin that he had built in the forest settlement of Anse Le Vert. On every side the oak trees hemmed it in with their high green domes of moss-draped leaves, and in the open spaces the forest wove its net of vines and brambles to catch the little beams of sunlight. Far back from the forest lay the great cypress swamp, trackless and untrodden, stretching away, it seemed, to the end of the world.

"And are the birds really extinct?" asked the naturalist. "Do you think it would be impossible to get some specimens of them?"

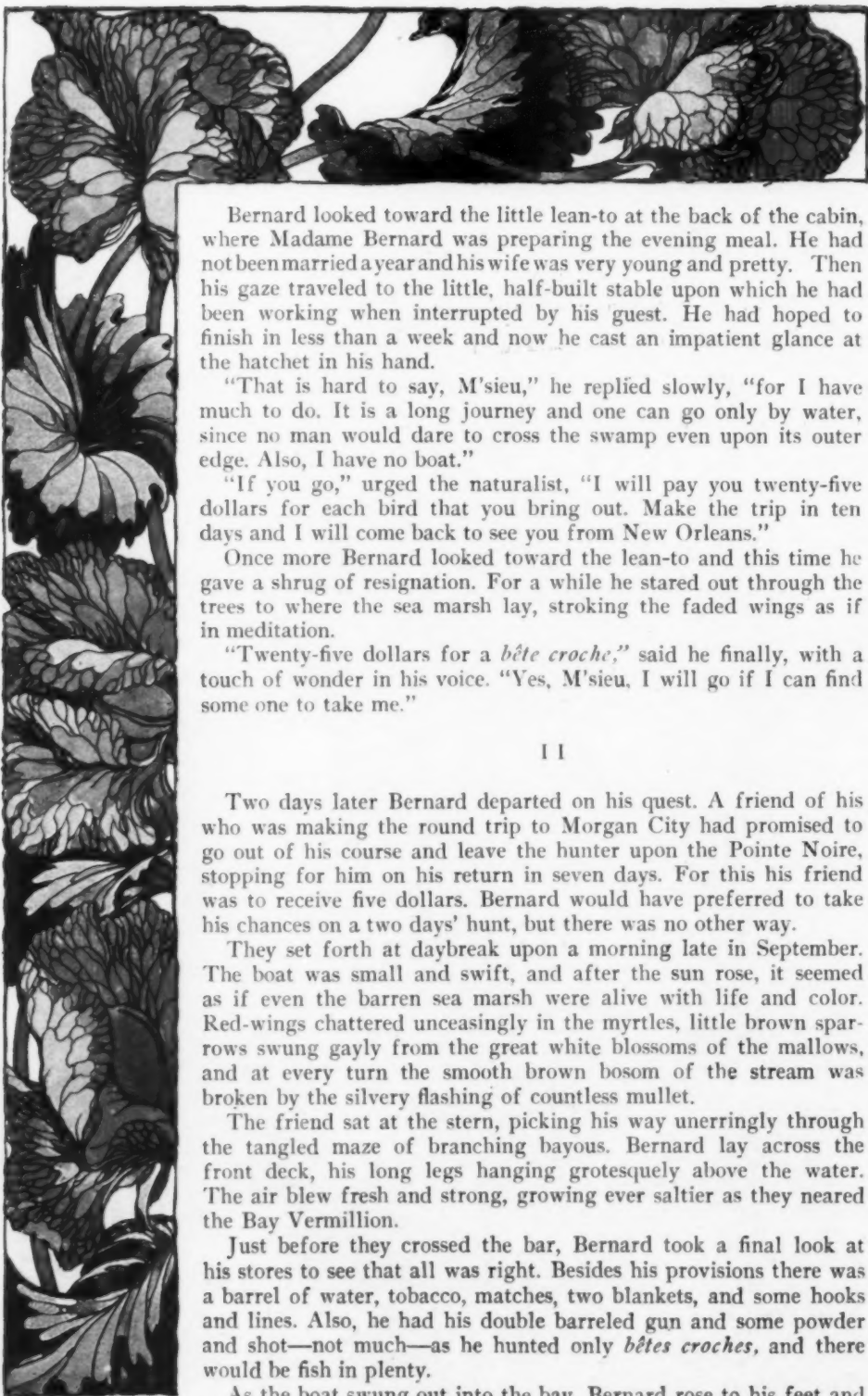
Bernard stretched an arm westward.

"Far off there, on the coast, the sea marsh goes out from the swamp into what is called the Pointe Noire," said he. "Last year the deer hunters told me that they had seen some of the birds flying about the inland pools. As for myself, I do not know."

Once more hope shone in the eyes of the naturalist.

"And would you go out there for me and see if this is so?" he asked eagerly.





Bernard looked toward the little lean-to at the back of the cabin, where Madame Bernard was preparing the evening meal. He had not been married a year and his wife was very young and pretty. Then his gaze traveled to the little, half-built stable upon which he had been working when interrupted by his guest. He had hoped to finish in less than a week and now he cast an impatient glance at the hatchet in his hand.

"That is hard to say, M'sieu," he replied slowly, "for I have much to do. It is a long journey and one can go only by water, since no man would dare to cross the swamp even upon its outer edge. Also, I have no boat."

"If you go," urged the naturalist, "I will pay you twenty-five dollars for each bird that you bring out. Make the trip in ten days and I will come back to see you from New Orleans."

Once more Bernard looked toward the lean-to and this time he gave a shrug of resignation. For a while he stared out through the trees to where the sea marsh lay, stroking the faded wings as if in meditation.

"Twenty-five dollars for a *bête croche*," said he finally, with a touch of wonder in his voice. "Yes, M'sieu, I will go if I can find some one to take me."

## II

Two days later Bernard departed on his quest. A friend of his who was making the round trip to Morgan City had promised to go out of his course and leave the hunter upon the Pointe Noire, stopping for him on his return in seven days. For this his friend was to receive five dollars. Bernard would have preferred to take his chances on a two days' hunt, but there was no other way.

They set forth at daybreak upon a morning late in September. The boat was small and swift, and after the sun rose, it seemed as if even the barren sea marsh were alive with life and color. Red-wings chattered unceasingly in the myrtles, little brown sparrows swung gayly from the great white blossoms of the mallows, and at every turn the smooth brown bosom of the stream was broken by the silvery flashing of countless mullet.

The friend sat at the stern, picking his way unerringly through the tangled maze of branching bayous. Bernard lay across the front deck, his long legs hanging grotesquely above the water. The air blew fresh and strong, growing ever saltier as they neared the Bay Vermillion.

Just before they crossed the bar, Bernard took a final look at his stores to see that all was right. Besides his provisions there was a barrel of water, tobacco, matches, two blankets, and some hooks and lines. Also, he had his double barreled gun and some powder and shot—not much—as he hunted only *bêtes croches*, and there would be fish in plenty.

As the boat swung out into the bay, Bernard rose to his feet and



looked far over the still brown sea marsh to where the trees stretched across the horizon in a long black line.

"Well," asked the friend, who was a hard old fisherman, "what do you see?"

"It is nothing," replied Bernard. "You would not understand."

They made the Point Noire at four o'clock that afternoon. It was a desolate place shut in on three sides by the cold brown waters of the bay, and upon its fourth by the cypress swamp. On the end of the point the deer hunters had built a rough hut—a flimsy, rotten thing, worn by wind and weather. There was no beach, for the waves gnawed their way unceasingly into the swamp, lapping eagerly against the bank until it was soft, and honeycombed, and powdered thickly with bits of white broken shell.

After the friend had unloaded Bernard upon the spongy bank, he put about for the open bay.

"If the wind is right you will see me on Monday at about this time," he called as the wind took his sail.

"*Bien*," replied Bernard, and began to put away his stores and to arrange the hut for his stay. When he had finished he went to the bank and fished, while the sun set and the water sucked in and out of the caverns beneath him with a mournful, whistling sound. After supper he sat before the hut and smoked countless cigarets, looking out toward his nearest neighbor as if for companionship.

This neighbor, old Pierre Valsan, lived at the mouth of Alligator Bayou, three miles across the bay. On clear nights one could see the tiny spark of his cabin from the hut on the Pointe Noire. For a time Bernard strained his eyes until he remembered that once a week Valsan went to Anse Le Vert to sell his catch. It must have been his boat that he had seen that morning heading in from the bay.

"He will be back to-morrow or the day after," said Bernard to himself, and he smiled with satisfaction as he thought that he would at least have a glimpse of some human being before his friend returned.

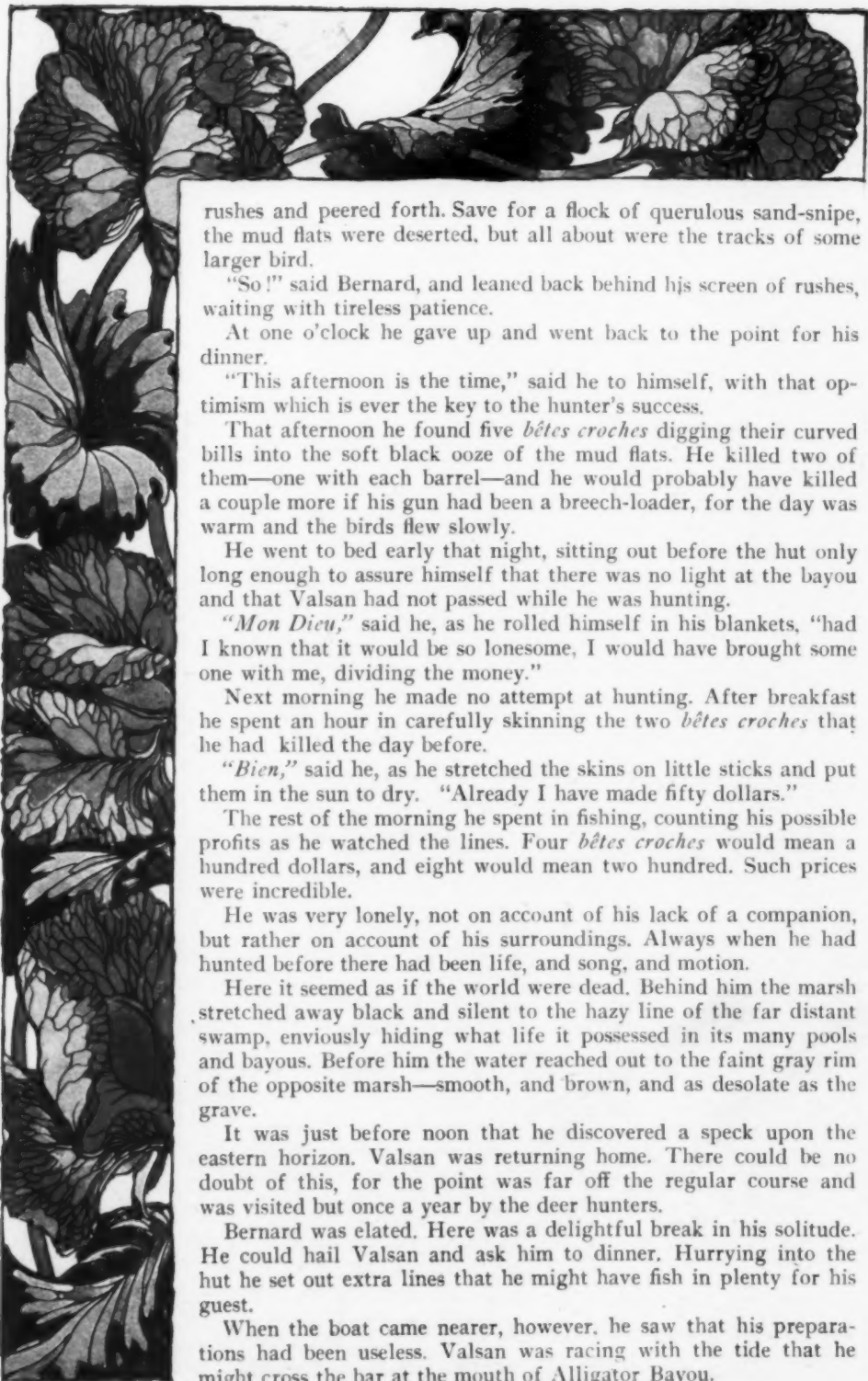
Next morning at sunrise Bernard set about his hunting. Behind the hut he found that the marsh had been burned off in patches by the deer hunters, who did this each year, giving the point its name. He tramped over the bare stretches swiftly, the charred grass crackling beneath his feet, each blade crowned with its tiny, green promise of new-born life. In the standing marsh he walked more slowly, carefully avoiding the bogs and alligator holes, until he found what he was seeking.

The pond was long and narrow and fringed with high green clumps of rushes. In its center was a little brackish pool, gleaming with strange opalescent hues from the seep of rotten vegetation. Closing in the water on every side were the mud flats—smooth, and black, and pock-marked with the fan-like tracks of countless birds.

Creeping noiselessly to the edge of the pond, Bernard parted the







rushes and peered forth. Save for a flock of querulous sand-snipe, the mud flats were deserted, but all about were the tracks of some larger bird.

"So!" said Bernard, and leaned back behind his screen of rushes, waiting with tireless patience.

At one o'clock he gave up and went back to the point for his dinner.

"This afternoon is the time," said he to himself, with that optimism which is ever the key to the hunter's success.

That afternoon he found five *bêtes croches* digging their curved bills into the soft black ooze of the mud flats. He killed two of them—one with each barrel—and he would probably have killed a couple more if his gun had been a breech-loader, for the day was warm and the birds flew slowly.

He went to bed early that night, sitting out before the hut only long enough to assure himself that there was no light at the bayou and that Valsan had not passed while he was hunting.

"*Mon Dieu*," said he, as he rolled himself in his blankets, "had I known that it would be so lonesome, I would have brought some one with me, dividing the money."

Next morning he made no attempt at hunting. After breakfast he spent an hour in carefully skinning the two *bêtes croches* that he had killed the day before.

"*Bien*," said he, as he stretched the skins on little sticks and put them in the sun to dry. "Already I have made fifty dollars."

The rest of the morning he spent in fishing, counting his possible profits as he watched the lines. Four *bêtes croches* would mean a hundred dollars, and eight would mean two hundred. Such prices were incredible.

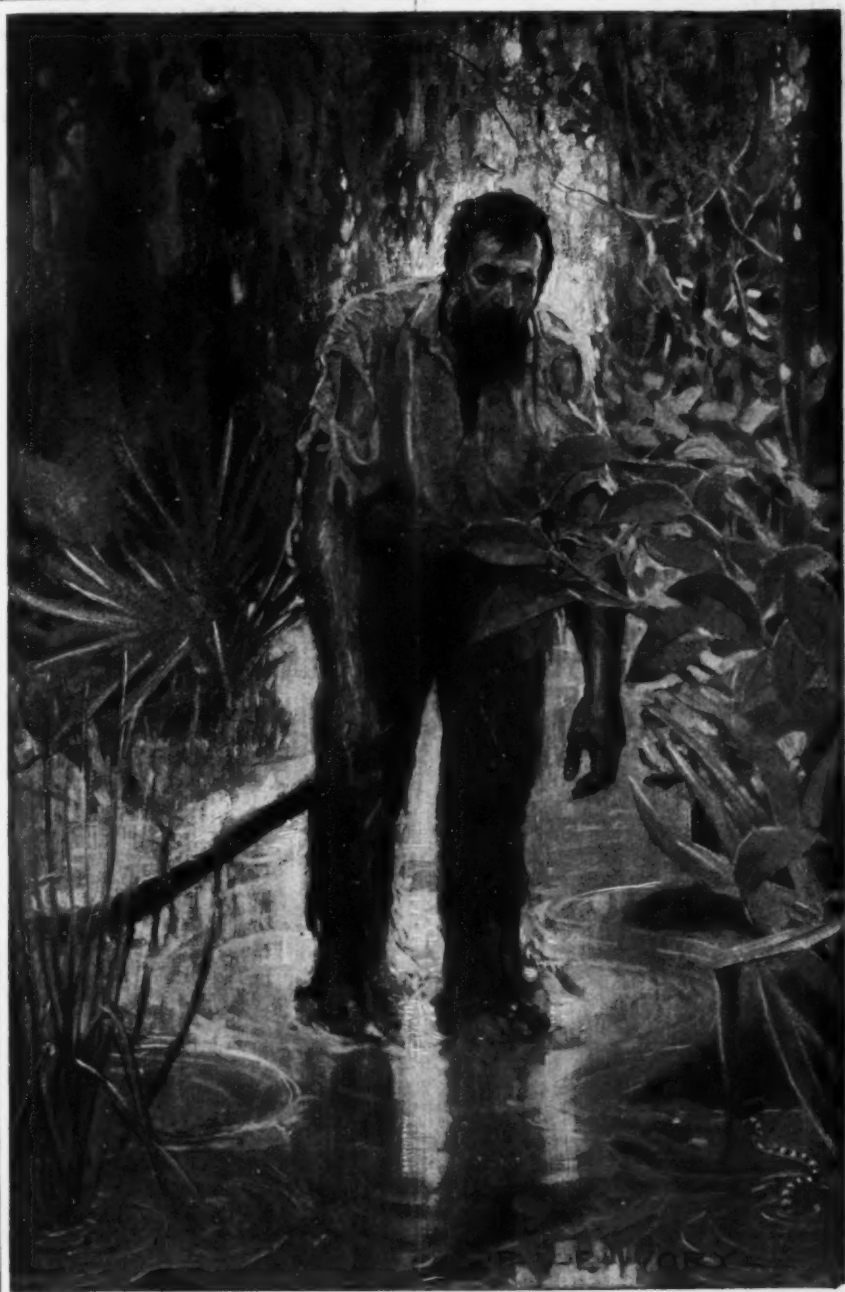
He was very lonely, not on account of his lack of a companion, but rather on account of his surroundings. Always when he had hunted before there had been life, and song, and motion.

Here it seemed as if the world were dead. Behind him the marsh stretched away black and silent to the hazy line of the far distant swamp, enviously hiding what life it possessed in its many pools and bayous. Before him the water reached out to the faint gray rim of the opposite marsh—smooth, and brown, and as desolate as the grave.

It was just before noon that he discovered a speck upon the eastern horizon. Valsan was returning home. There could be no doubt of this, for the point was far off the regular course and was visited but once a year by the deer hunters.

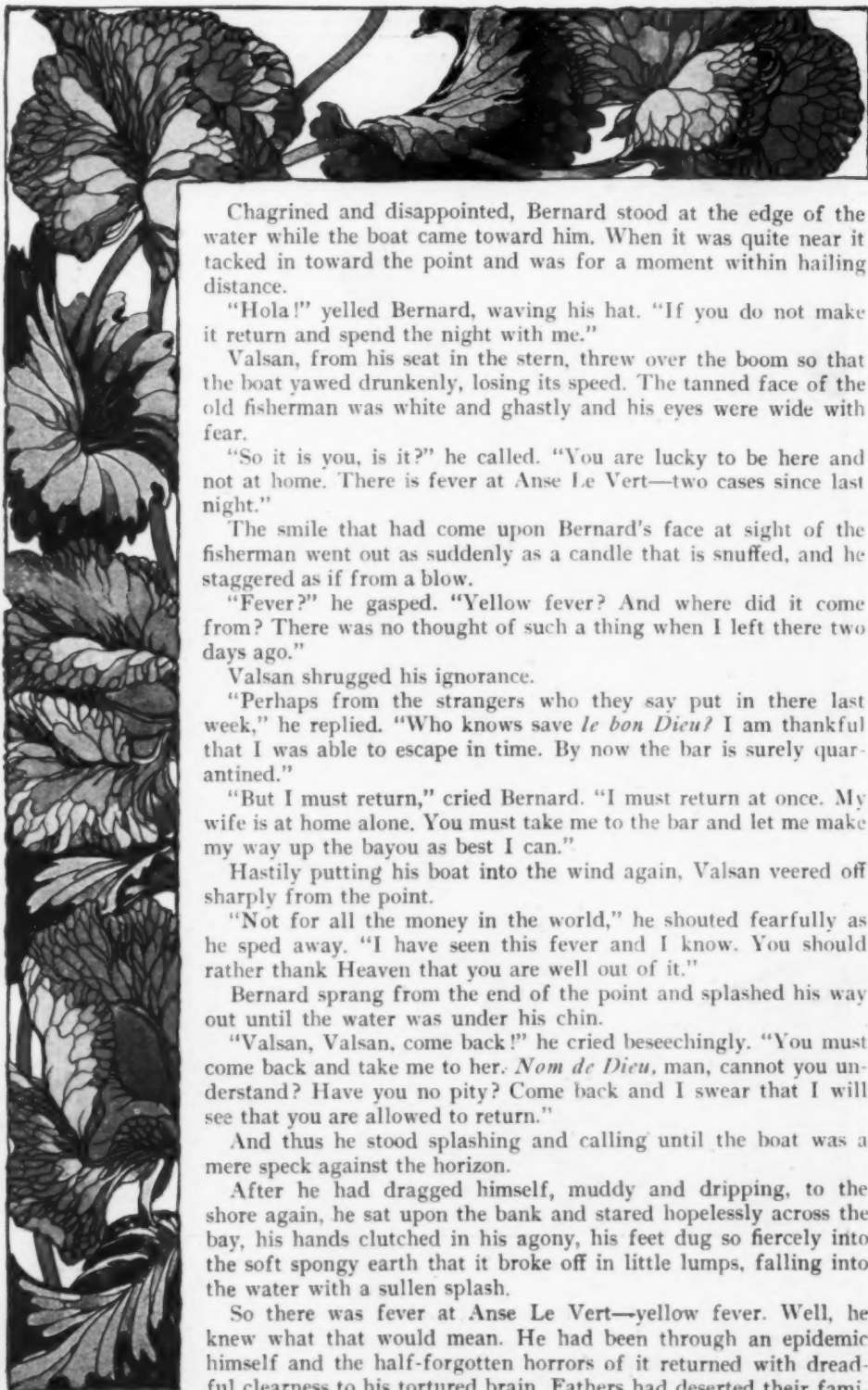
Bernard was elated. Here was a delightful break in his solitude. He could hail Valsan and ask him to dinner. Hurrying into the hut he set out extra lines that he might have fish in plenty for his guest.

When the boat came nearer, however, he saw that his preparations had been useless. Valsan was racing with the tide that he might cross the bar at the mouth of Alligator Bayou.



He was sick and weary and burning with fever





Chagrined and disappointed, Bernard stood at the edge of the water while the boat came toward him. When it was quite near it tacked in toward the point and was for a moment within hailing distance.

"Hola!" yelled Bernard, waving his hat. "If you do not make it return and spend the night with me."

Valsan, from his seat in the stern, threw over the boom so that the boat yawed drunkenly, losing its speed. The tanned face of the old fisherman was white and ghastly and his eyes were wide with fear.

"So it is you, is it?" he called. "You are lucky to be here and not at home. There is fever at Anse Le Vert—two cases since last night."

The smile that had come upon Bernard's face at sight of the fisherman went out as suddenly as a candle that is snuffed, and he staggered as if from a blow.

"Fever?" he gasped. "Yellow fever? And where did it come from? There was no thought of such a thing when I left there two days ago."

Valsan shrugged his ignorance.

"Perhaps from the strangers who they say put in there last week," he replied. "Who knows save *le bon Dieu*? I am thankful that I was able to escape in time. By now the bar is surely quarantined."

"But I must return," cried Bernard. "I must return at once. My wife is at home alone. You must take me to the bar and let me make my way up the bayou as best I can."

Hastily putting his boat into the wind again, Valsan veered off sharply from the point.

"Not for all the money in the world," he shouted fearfully as he sped away. "I have seen this fever and I know. You should rather thank Heaven that you are well out of it."

Bernard sprang from the end of the point and splashed his way out until the water was under his chin.

"Valsan, Valsan, come back!" he cried beseechingly. "You must come back and take me to her. *Nom de Dieu*, man, cannot you understand? Have you no pity? Come back and I swear that I will see that you are allowed to return."

And thus he stood splashing and calling until the boat was a mere speck against the horizon.

After he had dragged himself, muddy and dripping, to the shore again, he sat upon the bank and stared hopelessly across the bay, his hands clutched in his agony, his feet dug so fiercely into the soft spongy earth that it broke off in little lumps, falling into the water with a sullen splash.

So there was fever at Anse Le Vert—yellow fever. Well, he knew what that would mean. He had been through an epidemic himself and the half-forgotten horrors of it returned with dreadful clearness to his tortured brain. Fathers had deserted their fami-



lies, forgetting their love, their duty, in their rush for safety—leaving the stricken ones helpless behind them. People had died alone and unattended, calling for help, for mercy, in the silence of their forsaken homes. Others had tottered into the streets to gasp out their lives in the sunlight, shunned and unheeded by the fugitives. Men had gone mad with fear, drinking ghastly toasts to the destroyer, to the tortured victims, until, stricken themselves, they had died in profane revelry, shouting curses with their final breath. There had been no law, no order. Even the quarantine guards had deserted their posts, fleeing like the rest to some place of safety. And through these horrors, this chaos, his wife must pass alone and unprotected until his return—until his return.

Presently the man sprang to his feet at the thought that suddenly came to him. The day was Wednesday and his friend would not stop for him until Monday. He must wait four days for his return. For four days his wife must do as best she might—alone.

For a while Bernard was in a frenzy, striding up and down before the hut like a beast that has been caged. His eyes were wild and bloodshot and his hands worked nervously with the terrible torture of useless strength. On one of his rounds his glance fell upon the skins of the *bêtes croches*, and he ground them savagely beneath his heel, cursing the naturalist and his expedition as he gazed impotently eastward. When his fury had spent itself he sat down weakly to think.

That he could not remain upon the Pointe Noire until Monday was certain. If he did so he would go mad. There was a possible chance that Valsan would not be able to cross the bar, and, having time for reflection, would think of his anxiety and would return for him. He must cling to this hope until it was impossible to do so.

All that afternoon Bernard sat upon the point staring westward. He did not cook, he did not eat. His tobacco was forgotten. Until sunset he strained his eyes across the brown stretch of water, striving to pick out some hopeful speck against the hazy streak of sea marsh.

The night fell clear and warm, with a multitude of stars that seemed to wink in time with the lapping waves. Bernard still sat upon the point, but his head was buried in his arms—for a little dot of light now shone at the mouth of the bayou, and he knew that his chance had left him.

At nine o'clock he had another idea. Perhaps if he shot his gun at intervals Valsan would hear it and would take compassion upon his frenzy. The thought was absurd, but Bernard was no longer a rational being.

Hurrying into the hut he seized his gun and fired it frantically—as fast as he could load it—until the whole sea marsh resounded with its thunder. The gun grew hot and burned his hands, but still he fired until his powder was exhausted.

At midnight a fog fell upon the bay and he gave up in despair. Daybreak found him gazing eastward for the first faint streaks of





light, that he might see the fisherman he knew would never come.

The sun rose in a flood of fire, rolling back the curtain of the fog, and as the last shred vanished into the quiet air Bernard sprang to his feet with a cry of joy.

The swamp! Why had he not thought of it before? It was true that no one had ever dared to cross it, but he could try. Anything would be better than waiting for madness upon the point. If he went eastward in a direct line he ought to make the journey in a couple of days—three at the most. That would bring him to Anse Le Vert upon Saturday or Sunday—three days before his friend would be by for him. Perhaps he might even arrive at the settlement before the epidemic had reached its height. In that case there was a chance that the people would still be sane. Valsan had said there had been but two cases the day before.

His mind made up, Bernard set about immediately to make his preparations. He was sorry now that he had wasted his powder, but that could not be helped. He discovered that he was ravenously hungry, and he cooked and ate an enormous meal.

When he had finished, he wrote upon the inside of the hut with a charred stick, telling his friend of the fever and that he was going home through the swamp. Then he did his packing.

He took some flour, some fish, and some bacon—enough for five days. Also he took all of his matches and tobacco and his gun, without which he would have felt lost. Everything else he left behind.

When all was ready he fastened the door of the hut and set out over the blackened grass toward the far distant swamp. He did not hurry, indeed he seemed almost to creep along as he picked his way across the treacherous sea marsh, yet one who knew, would have marveled at his speed.

He reached the edge of the marsh at three o'clock—several hours later than he had counted on—for the going had been heavy and the distance was deceptive. Here the grass grew high and green, rising above his head except where it had been beaten down to make little watery lanes for the deer hunters.

Splashing through one of these lanes, Bernard came presently to the narrow strip of ground that ran between the sea marsh and the swamp. The soil was pale and sandy—thickly grown with myrtles. Also there were a few palmettoes and oak trees, squat and stunted by storms and lack of nourishment.

Dragging himself from out of the marsh, Bernard lay down beneath one of the trees to rest. He was dog-tired and his body was plastered to the arm-pits with mud and ooze. His food was black and sodden but his matches were intact, for he had put them with his tobacco and papers inside his hat. While he rested he ate some bacon, turning in disgust from the soggy fish. Afterward he smoked and stared out toward the bay, relaxing his body in preparation for the work before him.



III

At four o'clock Bernard rose stiffly and pushed through the thick growth of myrtle upon the inner edge of the strip, until he came to the swamp. For a moment he gazed at it, leaning upon his empty gun, his jaw set, each nerve and muscle stretched tight and tingling as if in preparation for a race.

And as he looked the swamp rose up before him like a wall—a wall against which he might dash himself uselessly until the end of time. It did not open before his gaze as do the isles of a forest. Instead, it seemed to solidify into one compact mass of fluted trunks and rusty foliage. There was no ground, or grass underneath of any kind. Only the still black water, foul and oily, dotted thickly about with the shiny cypress knees. Above the water hung a thin blue haze, and the air was rank and sour with stagnation and decay.

Bernard let out his breath in a long sigh of apprehension.

"*Dieu*, but this will take endurance," said he, and stepped down from the myrtles.

Before he had gone two hundred yards the silence of the swamp shut down upon him like a trap. With a start he realized that what he had thought was lone and dreary upon the Pointe Noire had been in reality alive with light and movement. There the sun had shone, the waves had curled, and the gulls had circled, screaming on the wind against the blue of the sky.

And over everything hung the awful silence of a Nature that has not died, but rather has never lived. A close, a pregnant silence, such as might have laid upon the new-made world as it waited for the birth of some creature to breathe its air.

At first Bernard tried to whistle, but he soon gave it up. The very trees seemed to stare at him in anger at his insolence. All that afternoon he splashed his way eastward, picking a path with infinite patience through the bewildering maze of cypress knees. The day was hot and sultry and the mosquitoes worried him incessantly, hanging about him in a thick, nagging cloud.

Just before sunset he made his camp on a little knoll of earth that had raised itself above the level of the swamp. He had come a remarkable distance and, despite his fatigue, he felt satisfied.

At sunset the darkness fell upon the swamp with a suddenness that was uncanny. It was as if some one had turned off a light. For a moment the high vault of the trees showed clear in a red sullen glow and then they were shut out by a blackness close and suffocating, a blackness that beat against the rays of the camp-fire, quenching them like water. And with this blackness there came from every side a deep whining drone that swelled like the note of some monstrous organ.

At the sound, Bernard reached up into the low hanging-branches, pulling down great handfuls of coarse green moss which he threw upon his fire. And although he sat in the smoke of his







smudge until his throat was raw and his eyes were streaming, the enemy never left him. Tirelessly they swarmed about him, digging their bills into the hard, leathery skin of his neck and face until it was red and swollen—mottled with hard white welts of poison.

Shortly after the sunset Bernard lay down with his head in the smoke and slept the sleep of exhaustion. He wished now that he had brought his blankets as a protection from the mosquitoes. In lieu of them he wrapped his head in his coat, digging his hands deep down within the sleeves.

And as he slept, the mosquitoes wormed their way inside the twisted folds of cloth and stung him mercilessly. Also they bored through the hard close weave of his flannel shirt and bit his chest until it felt as if it had been flayed.

At midnight he was awakened by a horrible, strangling scream that came from the trees behind him. Rousing himself he built up the fire and sat with his gun across his knees waiting. It was not until he saw the two green circles staring down at him from the darkness that he remembered his lack of ammunition. Dropping his weapon with a curse, he snatched a brand from the fire and flung it into the branches. There was a spitting snarl and the circles vanished. He waited a while, shrugged his shoulders, and returned to the stifling protection of his coat.

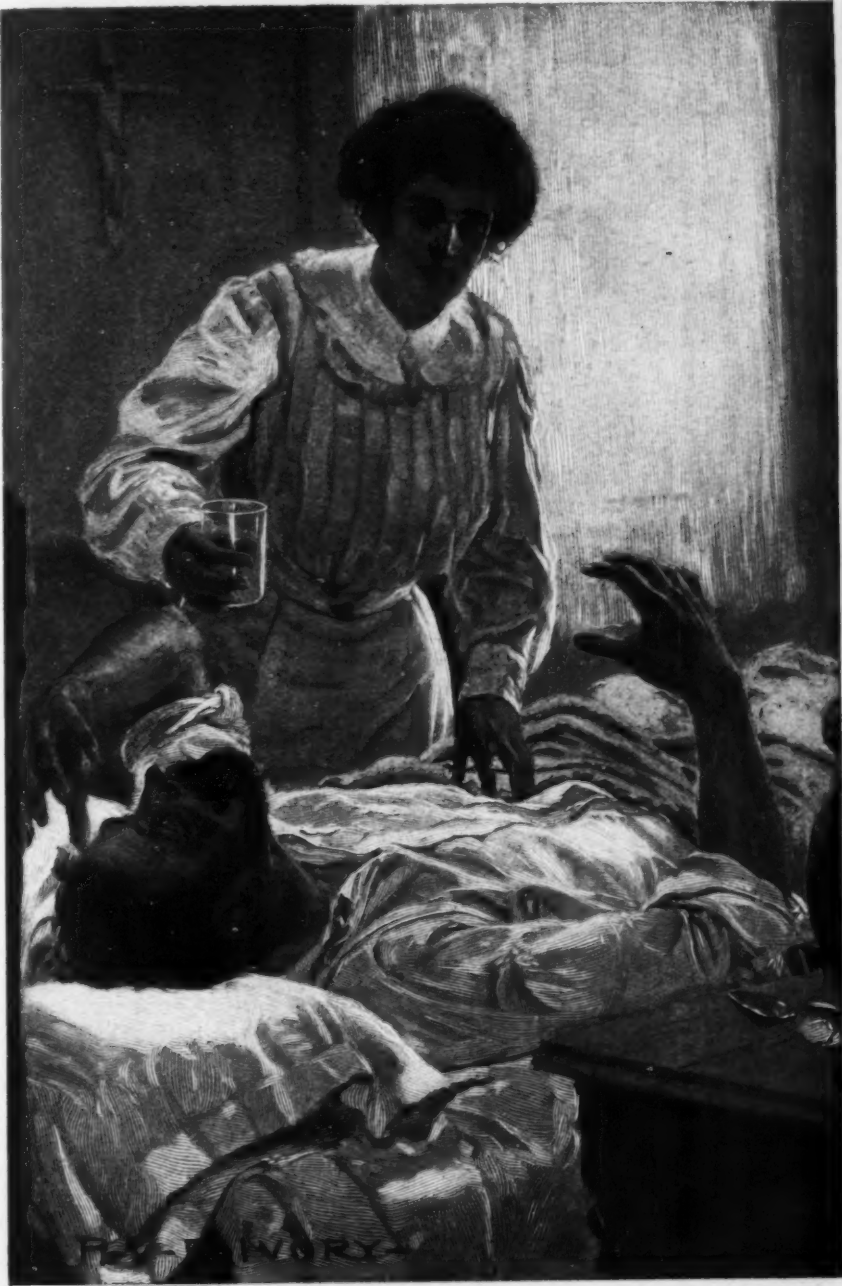
All the next day he traveled eastward, stopping only at midday to rest and eat. At sunset he camped upon a second knoll so like the first, that one would not have thought that he had moved a step. He was weak, and tired, and bitterly disappointed at his failure to reach Anse Le Vert that afternoon. He knew though, that he had not made as good time as he had made the day before, and in the thought he found some comfort.

After he had cooked his supper, he found that he could not eat it—that he was only thirsty. His throat felt dry and parched, and there was a singing in his ears which he confused with the whining of the mosquitoes. Again and again he leaned over the edge of the knoll to bury his face in the cool black water. That night he built no smudge, but sat before his fire stupid and dizzy until sleep overtook him. And although he should have lain like a log from his exhaustion, his rest was broken and uneasy.

When he awoke next morning, it was long after daybreak and a steady soaking rain was falling. The canopy of the swamp was wet and soggy and the water dripped unceasingly from the hanging points of moss. The haze above the water had now thickened into a fog which shut out all save the nearest tree trunks.

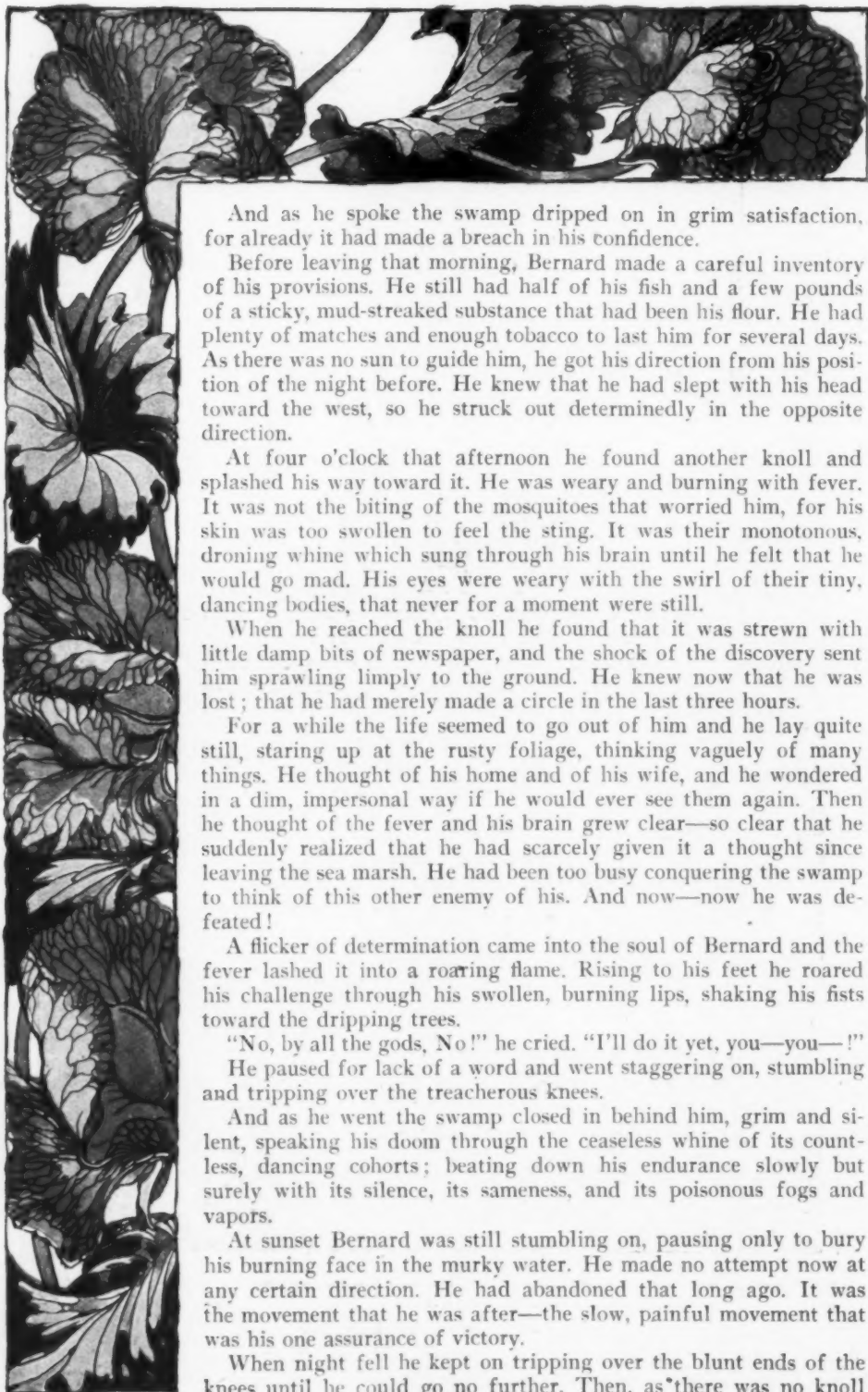
After some difficulty, Bernard made a fire and cooked the last of his bacon. It was a little piece—scarce larger than one's finger, and he was hungry once more—but he made it suffice.

"Perhaps I will not be able to get through until to-morrow, now that the rain is falling," said he to himself. "One had best be prepared for such an emergency."



Bernard was nursed by his wife





And as he spoke the swamp dripped on in grim satisfaction, for already it had made a breach in his confidence.

Before leaving that morning, Bernard made a careful inventory of his provisions. He still had half of his fish and a few pounds of a sticky, mud-streaked substance that had been his flour. He had plenty of matches and enough tobacco to last him for several days. As there was no sun to guide him, he got his direction from his position of the night before. He knew that he had slept with his head toward the west, so he struck out determinedly in the opposite direction.

At four o'clock that afternoon he found another knoll and splashed his way toward it. He was weary and burning with fever. It was not the biting of the mosquitoes that worried him, for his skin was too swollen to feel the sting. It was their monotonous, droning whine which sung through his brain until he felt that he would go mad. His eyes were weary with the swirl of their tiny, dancing bodies, that never for a moment were still.

When he reached the knoll he found that it was strewn with little damp bits of newspaper, and the shock of the discovery sent him sprawling limply to the ground. He knew now that he was lost; that he had merely made a circle in the last three hours.

For a while the life seemed to go out of him and he lay quite still, staring up at the rusty foliage, thinking vaguely of many things. He thought of his home and of his wife, and he wondered in a dim, impersonal way if he would ever see them again. Then he thought of the fever and his brain grew clear—so clear that he suddenly realized that he had scarcely given it a thought since leaving the sea marsh. He had been too busy conquering the swamp to think of this other enemy of his. And now—now he was defeated!

A flicker of determination came into the soul of Bernard and the fever lashed it into a roaring flame. Rising to his feet he roared his challenge through his swollen, burning lips, shaking his fists toward the dripping trees.

"No, by all the gods, No!" he cried. "I'll do it yet, you—you—!"

He paused for lack of a word and went staggering on, stumbling and tripping over the treacherous knees.

And as he went the swamp closed in behind him, grim and silent, speaking his doom through the ceaseless whine of its countless, dancing cohorts; beating down his endurance slowly but surely with its silence, its sameness, and its poisonous fogs and vapors.

At sunset Bernard was still stumbling on, pausing only to bury his burning face in the murky water. He made no attempt now at any certain direction. He had abandoned that long ago. It was the movement that he was after—the slow, painful movement that was his one assurance of victory.

When night fell he kept on tripping over the blunt ends of the knees until he could go no further. Then, as there was no knoll



and no chance to find one, he groped his way to a tree and sat down in the water with his back in a hollow and fell asleep.

He was awakened the next day by the morning sunlight, which streamed through a rent in the canopy directly over him. Under its beams the water shone like molten gold.

"*Dieu!*" said Bernard, and rose weakly to his feet, in horror of the poisoned, swollen creature that gazed back at him. He was stiff and weary, and each movement was a torture, but his fever had left him and he felt quite sane. Also, he was hungry, and he fumbled for his provisions until he remembered that he had lost them the day before. Then he discovered that he had lost his hat also, with its carefully stored matches and tobacco.

He was panic stricken and spent an hour in fruitless search, poking and peering among the knees and tree trunks.

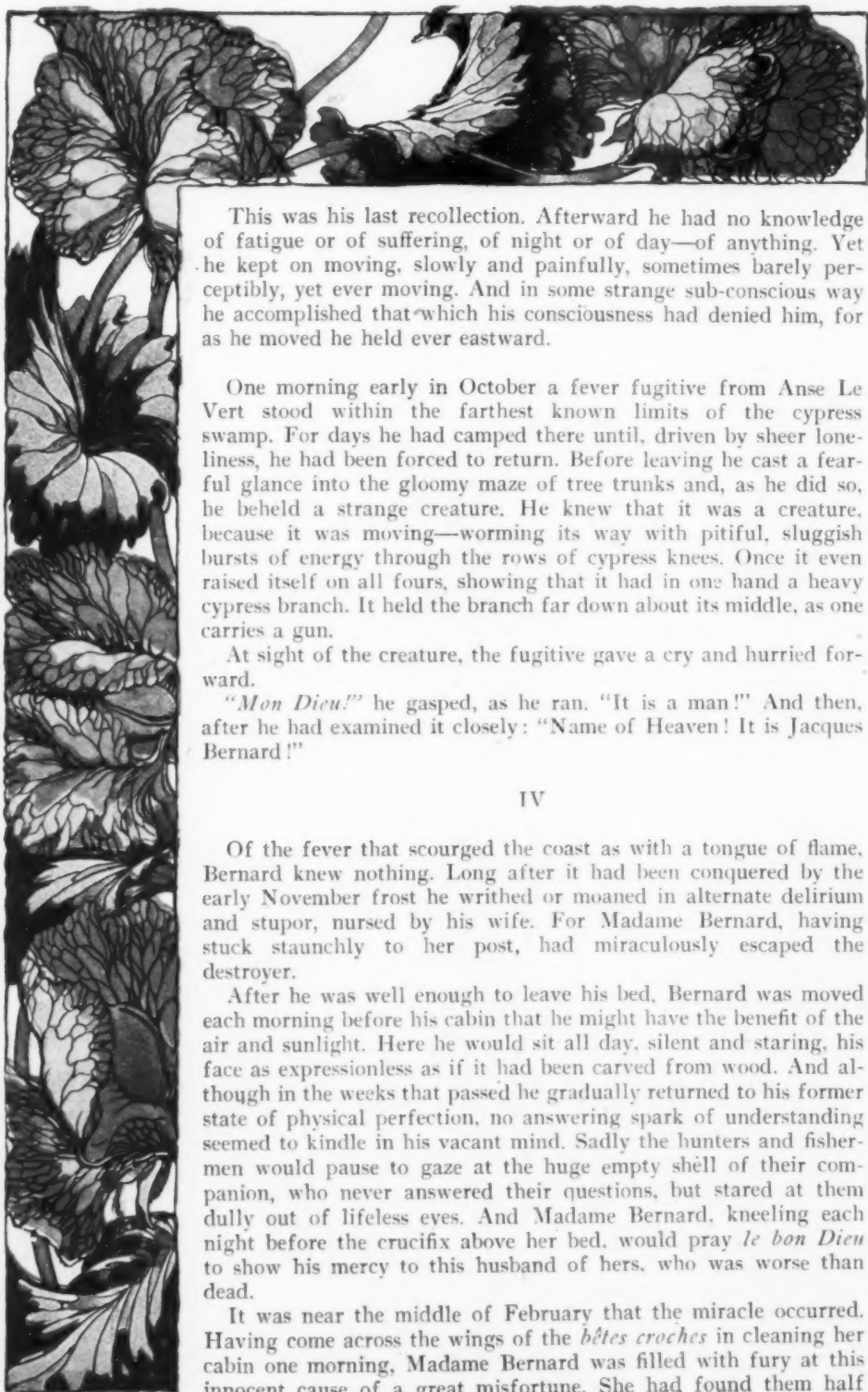
He had now only his gun, a useless mass of wood and metal, a worse than useless mass, for its weight was irksome and it often jammed between the trees as he dragged it wearily behind him. Yet he held to it with a pitiful desperation, for it was the only tie that bound him to that other world which, ages ago, he had left upon entering the swamp. He felt that if it were lost he would be lost also.

When he continued his journey that morning, he took his direction carefully from the sun and stumbled along with a new terror in his brain. The affair had resolved itself into a single struggle. It was no longer a question of reaching his wife, or protecting her, or arriving at Anse Le Vert before Monday. It was not a question of the mosquitoes or the fever—even the swamp itself was eliminated. It was simply a question of starvation. Either he would find the settlement or he would starve.

All that day and all the next he pushed in with the grim alternative staring into his swollen eyes. And as he went the hunger gnawed and gnawed, growing each hour more unbearable. His whole existence had resolved itself into a single word—food. He searched for it in his saner moments, striving to stay his hunger in a hundred different ways. He ate the little water cabbages and the curling water vines. He chewed on bark, on twigs, and on leaves, which he tore from the trees. He hunted the turtles and the snakes, creeping upon them with infinite patience, his gun poised ready for the blow. And always, just as he was within reach of them, they would slide off their logs into the water, to reappear presently a dozen yards away, and stare at him with their little, beady eyes.

Sometimes a duck would rise from behind a tree trunk, to whirl madly away while he stared after it, his empty gun in his hands. And once he chased a wounded crane until he was forced to stop from sheer exhaustion.

One night his fever came mercifully to stay, and in the morning his gnawing pain had left him. It was as if his stomach had died in the darkness and desolation.



This was his last recollection. Afterward he had no knowledge of fatigue or of suffering, of night or of day—of anything. Yet he kept on moving, slowly and painfully, sometimes barely perceptibly, yet ever moving. And in some strange sub-conscious way he accomplished that which his consciousness had denied him, for as he moved he held ever eastward.

One morning early in October a fever fugitive from Anse Le Vert stood within the farthest known limits of the cypress swamp. For days he had camped there until, driven by sheer loneliness, he had been forced to return. Before leaving he cast a fearful glance into the gloomy maze of tree trunks and, as he did so, he beheld a strange creature. He knew that it was a creature, because it was moving—worming its way with pitiful, sluggish bursts of energy through the rows of cypress knees. Once it even raised itself on all fours, showing that it had in one hand a heavy cypress branch. It held the branch far down about its middle, as one carries a gun.

At sight of the creature, the fugitive gave a cry and hurried forward.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he gasped, as he ran. "It is a man!" And then, after he had examined it closely: "Name of Heaven! It is Jacques Bernard!"

#### IV

Of the fever that scourged the coast as with a tongue of flame, Bernard knew nothing. Long after it had been conquered by the early November frost he writhed or moaned in alternate delirium and stupor, nursed by his wife. For Madame Bernard, having stuck staunchly to her post, had miraculously escaped the destroyer.

After he was well enough to leave his bed, Bernard was moved each morning before his cabin that he might have the benefit of the air and sunlight. Here he would sit all day, silent and staring, his face as expressionless as if it had been carved from wood. And although in the weeks that passed he gradually returned to his former state of physical perfection, no answering spark of understanding seemed to kindle in his vacant mind. Sadly the hunters and fishermen would pause to gaze at the huge empty shell of their companion, who never answered their questions, but stared at them dully out of lifeless eyes. And Madame Bernard, kneeling each night before the crucifix above her bed, would pray *le bon Dieu* to show his mercy to this husband of hers, who was worse than dead.

It was near the middle of February that the miracle occurred. Having come across the wings of the *bêtes croches* in cleaning her cabin one morning, Madame Bernard was filled with fury at this innocent cause of a great misfortune. She had found them half



hidden behind a shelf where her husband had placed them before starting upon his expedition, and, in her anger, she cast them through the open doorway, meaning to burn them in her bake oven outside.

Describing a circle through the air, the wings fluttered earthward, one of them dropping lightly into the lap of Bernard, who sat in his armchair, oblivious of everything. Vaguely, mechanically, he grasped the bit of bone and feather and raised it to the level of his staring eyes. Then, as if it had supplied some missing particle in the mechanism of his brain, Bernard rose quite naturally to his feet, the wing held in one hand. Slowly, meditatively, he stroked it, gazing out through the trees toward the sea-marsh, the light of sanity kindling and growing brighter in his face, and in his vacant, soulless eyes.

Entering the cabin with the firm tread of one who has come to a decision, he returned the wing to its shelf and took down his hatchet from its rack upon the wall.

"I will not go upon this errand for the m'sieu from the city," said he to his wife. "If he wishes the *bêtes croches*, let him seek them for himself while I finish my stable."

And before the amazed and overjoyed Madame Bernard could answer him, he had hurried outside.

All that morning Bernard worked upon his stable, stopping often to stare in amazement at his companions, who gathered about him in a silent, awe-stricken crowd.

"*Mon Dieu*," he asked, continually, "am I such a wonderful carpenter that you should all abandon your task to watch me? But no, you are mistaken. See, I have not even chosen seasoned timber for my building. It is old and rotten. I cannot understand how I have not noticed this before."

In the days that followed he went about his usual tasks as if nothing had occurred to break the even monotony of his life. It was as if the merciful gods had erased the memory of his tortures from the tablets of his mind. He seemed to have no memory of his journey, of his struggles, or of his illness that had followed.

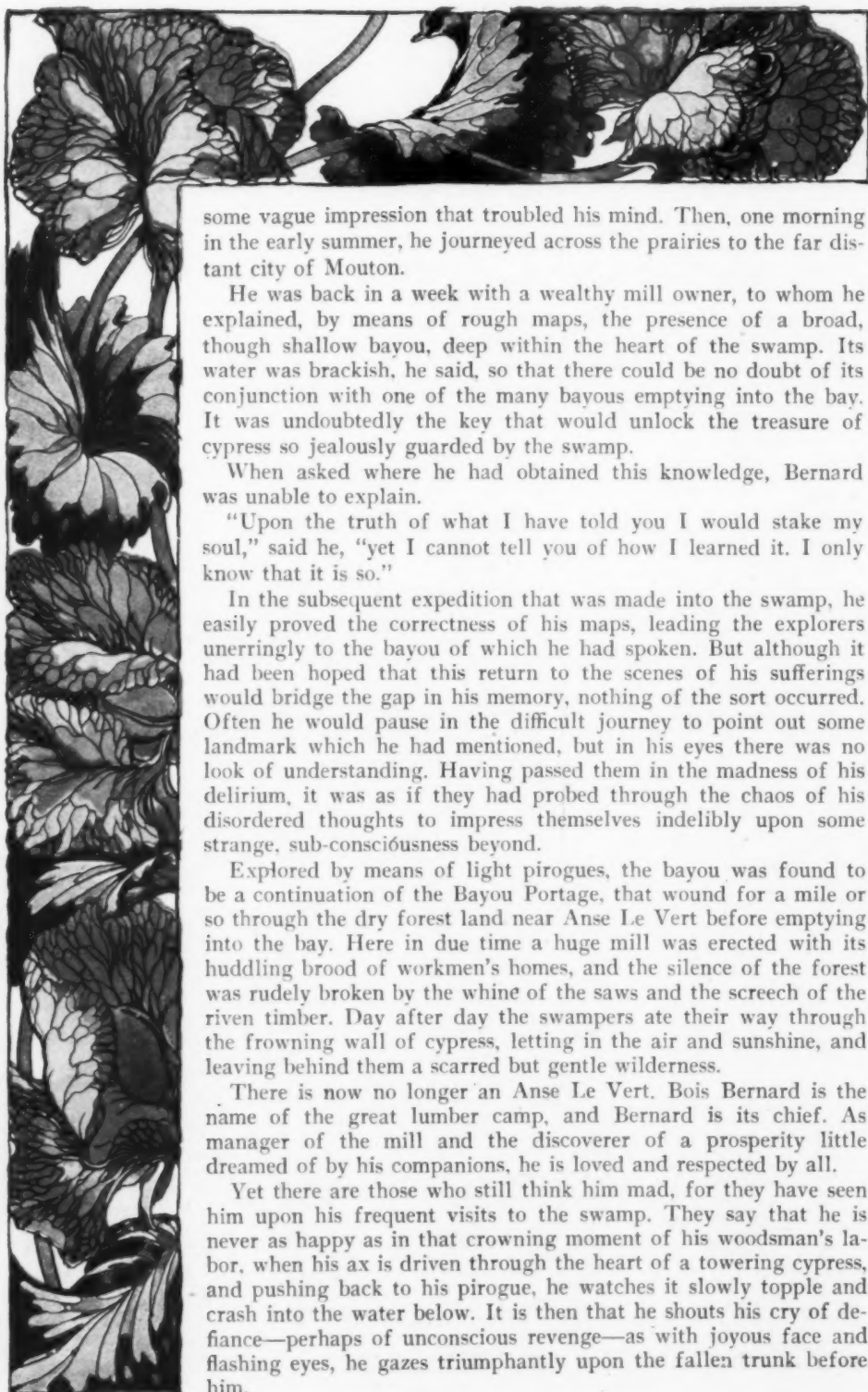
At the many changes that had been made by the fever he marveled greatly, yet, despite the continued explanations of his companions he could never understand.

"It is a poor joke, *mes amis*," he would always reply. "When those who are gone return again, they will not thank you for what you have said."

Yet, far back in the inmost, unknown recesses of his brain, there must have been some faint, elusive memory which he could feel but could not comprehend. For through it he brought about those changes that added so materially to the life and prosperity of Anse Le Vert.

Seized with a growing restlessness, he went each day to wander alone through the outer edge of the cypress swamp, formulating





some vague impression that troubled his mind. Then, one morning in the early summer, he journeyed across the prairies to the far distant city of Mouton.

He was back in a week with a wealthy mill owner, to whom he explained, by means of rough maps, the presence of a broad, though shallow bayou, deep within the heart of the swamp. Its water was brackish, he said, so that there could be no doubt of its conjunction with one of the many bayous emptying into the bay. It was undoubtedly the key that would unlock the treasure of cypress so jealously guarded by the swamp.

When asked where he had obtained this knowledge, Bernard was unable to explain.

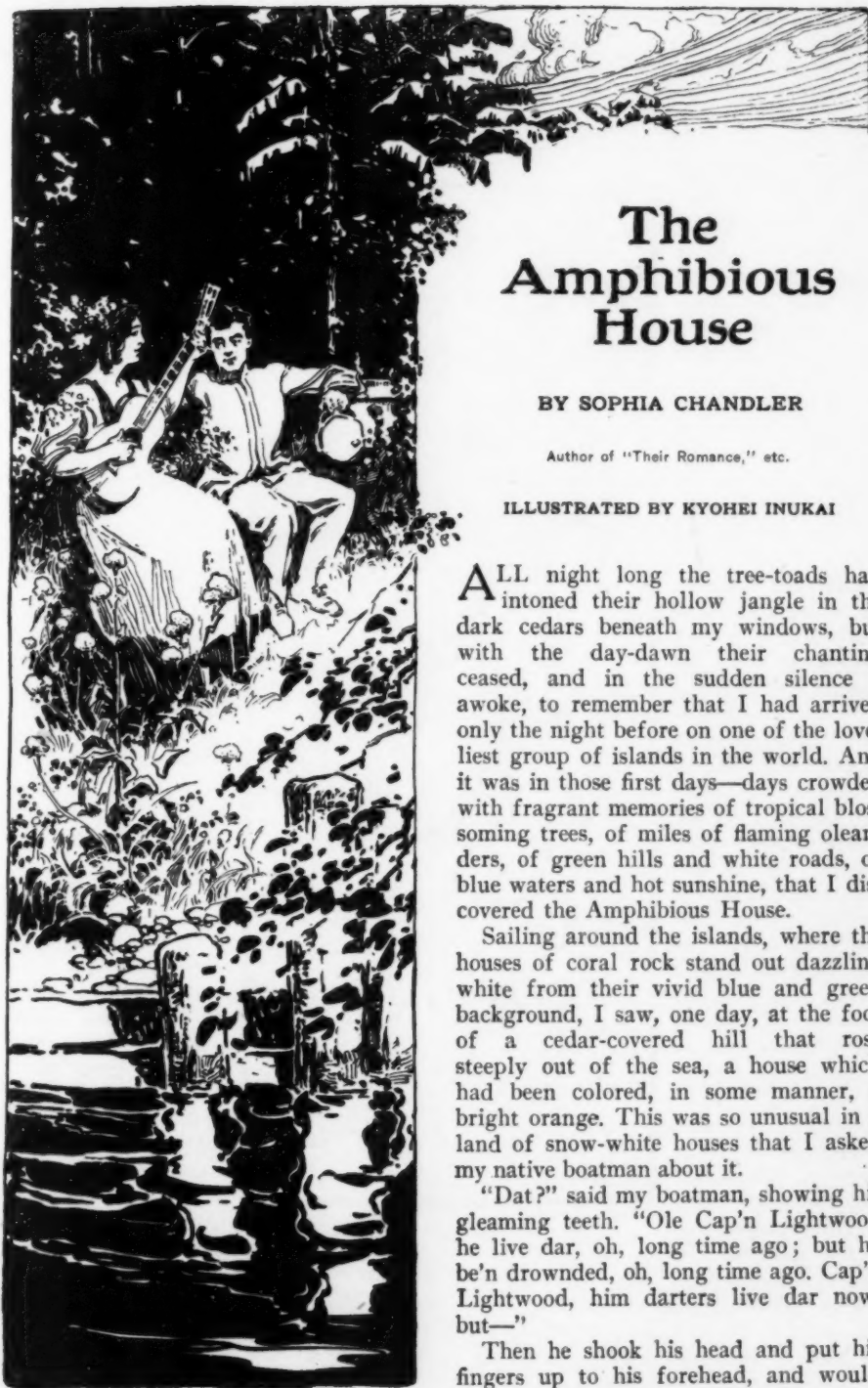
"Upon the truth of what I have told you I would stake my soul," said he, "yet I cannot tell you of how I learned it. I only know that it is so."

In the subsequent expedition that was made into the swamp, he easily proved the correctness of his maps, leading the explorers unerringly to the bayou of which he had spoken. But although it had been hoped that this return to the scenes of his sufferings would bridge the gap in his memory, nothing of the sort occurred. Often he would pause in the difficult journey to point out some landmark which he had mentioned, but in his eyes there was no look of understanding. Having passed them in the madness of his delirium, it was as if they had probed through the chaos of his disordered thoughts to impress themselves indelibly upon some strange, sub-consciousness beyond.

Explored by means of light pirogues, the bayou was found to be a continuation of the Bayou Portage, that wound for a mile or so through the dry forest land near Anse Le Vert before emptying into the bay. Here in due time a huge mill was erected with its huddling brood of workmen's homes, and the silence of the forest was rudely broken by the whine of the saws and the screech of the riven timber. Day after day the swamper ate their way through the frowning wall of cypress, letting in the air and sunshine, and leaving behind them a scarred but gentle wilderness.

There is now no longer an Anse Le Vert. Bois Bernard is the name of the great lumber camp, and Bernard is its chief. As manager of the mill and the discoverer of a prosperity little dreamed of by his companions, he is loved and respected by all.

Yet there are those who still think him mad, for they have seen him upon his frequent visits to the swamp. They say that he is never as happy as in that crowning moment of his woodsman's labor, when his ax is driven through the heart of a towering cypress, and pushing back to his pirogue, he watches it slowly topple and crash into the water below. It is then that he shouts his cry of defiance—perhaps of unconscious revenge—as with joyous face and flashing eyes, he gazes triumphantly upon the fallen trunk before him.



She would finger her guitar and sing

## The Amphibious House

BY SOPHIA CHANDLER

Author of "Their Romance," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY KYOHEI INUKAI

ALL night long the tree-toads had intoned their hollow jangle in the dark cedars beneath my windows, but with the day-dawn their chanting ceased, and in the sudden silence I awoke, to remember that I had arrived only the night before on one of the loveliest group of islands in the world. And it was in those first days—days crowded with fragrant memories of tropical blossoming trees, of miles of flaming oleanders, of green hills and white roads, of blue waters and hot sunshine, that I discovered the Amphibious House.

Sailing around the islands, where the houses of coral rock stand out dazzling white from their vivid blue and green background, I saw, one day, at the foot of a cedar-covered hill that rose steeply out of the sea, a house which had been colored, in some manner, a bright orange. This was so unusual in a land of snow-white houses that I asked my native boatman about it.

"Dat?" said my boatman, showing his gleaming teeth. "Ole Cap'n Lightwood he live dar, oh, long time ago; but he be'n drownded, oh, long time ago. Cap'n Lightwood, him darters live dar now, but—"

Then he shook his head and put his fingers up to his forehead, and would say no more to all my questioning.



From this hint of mystery the Amphibious House assumed an attraction beyond anything else in the islands. It was built so near the water it was difficult to tell whether it was on land or sea. The eastern veranda hung over the water, reflecting blurred orange-colored arches and balustrades in the clear blue depths, and at high tide the coral steps were washed by the sea. The western veranda clung tightly to the earth, overlooking a walled garden dense with banana trees and tropical flowers, with a red-flagged walk running all around it, close to the white wall. But what struck me at once, as quite as strange as the color of the house, was that this western veranda was thickly overgrown with passion-flower vines, for nearly all the verandas in the islands are shaded with feathery white clematis. It seemed to me there must be a reason for the orange-colored house with the passion vine hanging over its entrance; and I often looked for some glimpse of the occupants of this house, but only once I saw an old negro woman in the garden, who shaded her eyes to see me as I drove by.

One afternoon I had rowed over to the town to make some purchases, and an hour or two later waited at the pier for my boatman, who, enticed out of the hot sunshine by the cool, dark shadows

beneath the piers, had probably fallen asleep. The ferry had just left for its afternoon trip, and I was watching the foamy white track upon the shimmering blue sea, when I heard a gasp at my side. I turned to see a very little woman,

who peered anxiously from beneath her wide-brimmed hat at the receding boat.

Immediately she had turned to me, saying in a most forlorn little old voice:

"I've missed the boat! Now what am I going to do? How am I going to get back home? Eunice will be so alarmed!"

She looked as if she had been taken bodily out of a fairy tale and set down upon the pier. Her dress was of thin corn-colored barège, embroidered with a little black sprig, and trimmed with short black silk fringe. She wore half-gloves of black lace, and grasped very tightly a huge green umbrella. Her wide-brimmed hat of fine black straw was tied down over bobbing gray curls quite after the fashion of fairy god-mothers, and altogether I was entranced by her appearance. Anxious to draw her

into conversation, I explained that I had rowed over, and as soon as the boatman appeared I would be glad to take her to the landing. She looked at me quickly then, with gray eyes which had a strange repressed expression, and said, nervously



He kissed me



I turned to see a very little woman

twisting her hands around the handle of the umbrella:

"I am Miss Lightwood; and perhaps—"

I exclaimed with delight, and then she said, in an odd, embarrassed way:

"You have heard about us?"

The boat, with its dark-skinned oarsman, was making its way around the end of the pier, and I said quickly that all I knew was that she was Captain Lightwood's daughter, and lived in the orange-colored house close to the water's edge. I saw, by her expression of relief, that this was nothing at all, but as the boat was being made fast, and the boatman took our parcels, she whispered to me:

"These natives are afraid of us; they don't like—queer people—my sister is a little—odd."

In the boat Miss Lightwood unfurled her huge umbrella, and sat silent under its green canopy, while I studied her small worn face with its downcast eyes and lines of repression, as we went speeding across the sparkling blue water. I lost myself in speculation about Miss Lightwood and her odd sister, and

roused to the fact that the boat was scraping against the veranda of the Amphibious House, whose steps were already under water.

"Wont you come in?" asked Miss Lightwood timidly, as if afraid I would refuse. "Jozuina will have tea ready, and I'd be so glad to have you." And she added in a very low voice: "No one ever comes to see me."

Who would refuse to enter a fairy palace if the doors were held wide open? My boatman looked at me, mournfully shaking his head, and rowed out to a safe distance, where he sat while his boat swung idly, lolling a strange, sorrowful air.

"You will not mind my sister?" asked Miss Lightwood, as we entered the cool, dark interior of the Amphibious House, which smelled strongly of the sea. "She is older than I; but she seldom speaks, and takes little notice."

She sighed, walking by my side up the stairs to the drawing-room; and there, the moment she opened the door, I saw the elder Miss Lightwood sitting by a shaded window, overlooking the

blue sea and all the boats that came in to these islands from far away countries.

The rising and falling cadences of the boatman's sorrowful song came to us here quite distinctly.

The elder Miss Lightwood was small like her sister, but she wore a false front of crinkled brown hair, and walked with a crutch, though I seldom saw her leave that place by the window, for she spent all her days there with her hand on a spy-glass that had belonged to old Captain Lightwood, who had lain for long years on the shining sands off the coast of Ceylon.

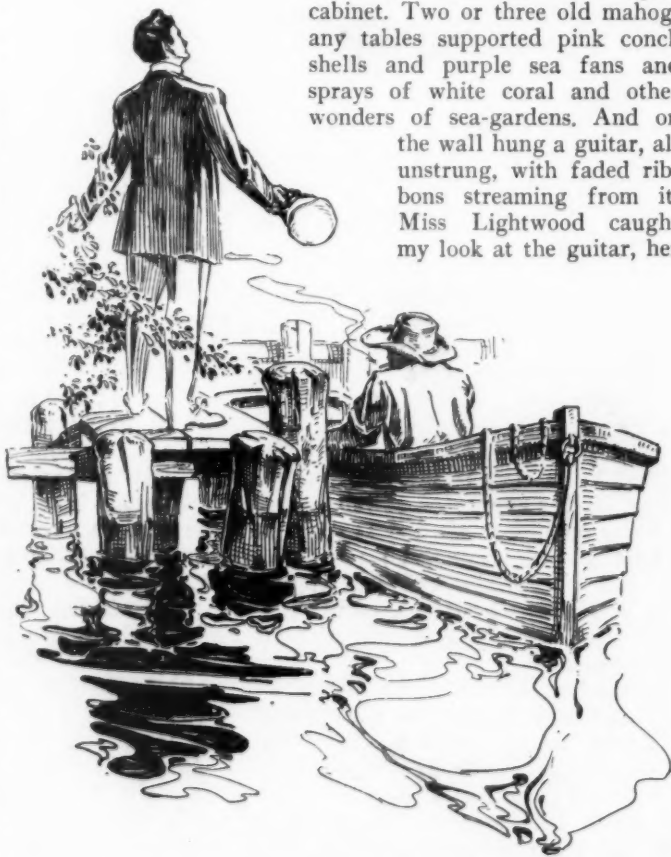
The drawing-room of the Amphibious House was a curious blend of the tropical and temperate zones; there was Chinese matting upon the floor and green curtains hanging before the windows to keep the sun under; there were lounging chairs and low tables of East Indian manufacture; and dried Pampas grasses and Solomon's feathers waved from huge copper vases. But the tiny fireplace for damp rainy days, with shining brass fire-irons, and the slippery horse-hair sofa braced against the wall, and the two equally slippery stiff chairs at either side of the fireplace, spoke loudly of the English origin of the Lightwoods. Queer portraits hung upon the walls; one of Captain Lightwood was so black with age and mildew that only two peering forbidding eyes looked out from the canvases, though the

younger Miss Lightwood often assured me that "It was the living likeness of him." And on the wall, also, hung daguerreotypes of herself and the silent sister, which showed them at eighteen and twenty.

"Forty years ago," said Miss Lightwood at my elbow, and she sighed.

Forty years ago! Then indeed had the elder Miss Lightwood, who sat silent by the window been beautiful!

At one end of the drawing-room stood a curious Chinese cabinet of lacquer, with queer doors and drawers of cunning workmanship, and so highly suggestive of hidden treasures, that I often wondered what it might hold, but though Miss Lightwood took great pleasure in telling me the history of all the other articles in her drawing-room, she never even mentioned the lacquer cabinet. Two or three old mahogany tables supported pink conch shells and purple sea fans and sprays of white coral and other wonders of sea-gardens. And on the wall hung a guitar, all unstrung, with faded ribbons streaming from it. Miss Lightwood caught my look at the guitar, her



When the ship anchored he always came directly to—



faded eyes glistened and a tremulous smile flickered over her face, like water stirred by a breeze, and she said intensely, indicating the silent Miss Lightwood by the window:

"It was hers. Once—forty years ago—she played and sang."

Then she leaned forward and whispered as if she could not trust herself to say it aloud:

"Eunice sang love songs then."

Then smiling old Jozuina, with her head wrapped in a bright bandanna and gold rings shaking in her ears, brought in tea, and the younger Miss Lightwood removed some of the pink conches and the purple sea fans and the coral sprays to make room for the tray. The tea was hot under the cozy, and Miss Lightwood poured it into cups of rare Chinese pattern.

"Much sugar, my dear? No? Just a little? And cream? We never use lemon—we don't seem to care for it some way. This is Darjeeling, my dear—very mild—we never drink any other kind."

The elder Miss Lightwood, never leaving her window and her spy-glass, drank a cup of tea, but shook her head at anything else.

"Her appetite's so poor," explained the younger Miss Lightwood, with an anxious look, shaking her gray curls, and for a moment there was a silence, during which the song of the boatman, far out on the water, floated up to us in a melancholy chant. Then Miss Lightwood said, as if in that moment she had pushed out of her mind something disagreeable: "But you must try some of these biscuits. Jozuina made them this morning; or a cake—do have a cake. Jozuina will be sadly hurt if you don't eat a cake."

And to save Jozuina's feelings I ate cake and biscuit both, loudly praising her perfection in the art of baking, for I had a glimpse of her glinting gold earrings behind the drawing-room door.

After that I often rowed across to the Amphibious House, knowing all the time, as I made the journey, that I was under the surveillance of the elder Miss Lightwood's spyglass. I was quite sure that the elder Miss Lightwood by the window said to the younger Miss Lightwood out under the passion-vines:

"The foreigner is coming, Hetty; you had better have Jozuina put the kettle on."

And if I needed any proof, it was always supplied by the arrival of the tea-tray almost as soon as I had removed my bonnet. On these afternoons, while we sat in the East India chairs, drinking the fragrant Darjeeling, I waited impatiently for the story of the orange-colored house with its passion-vine wreathed veranda and the silent Miss Lightwood, in which I thought I sensed a tragedy; but though the younger Miss Lightwood had an exquisite delight in telling me the love-stories of nearly all the people in the islands, some way, in all her amorous recitals she omitted to mention herself or her sister. With a conscious smile she would begin:

"It was the year of the high tide that Richard Corning first saw Laura—"

With growing pleasure in her face she proceeded to describe carefully Laura's fair beauty and the dark and handsome Richard:

"Just as it should be, my dear."

When she told how Richard's father



had chosen another bride for his son, and of Richard's revolt, her old cheeks burned with excitement. With great secrecy she related the clandestine meetings of the lovers and told of the calabash tree which was their trysting place. Then her face paled, and in trembling voice she told how Richard's father discovered all, and by the time these two young lovers, summoned out of the dim, dead past, had been rudely parted by an unsympathetic parent, the younger Miss Lightwood was almost in tears. Then, like sudden sunshine, out came the smiles and tremulous joy. The chosen bride married quite unexpectedly a wealthy octogenarian, and Richard was allowed to wed his Laura.

"And, oh, my dear," said Miss Lightwood, putting her hand, the hand that had never worn a lover's ring, upon mine, "Oh, you should have seen that wedding! Such a day I never expect to see again in all my life. She in ashes of roses silk brought from England, and a white chip bonnet tied under her chin, and a veil of lace! And such lace! And Richard was a fine looking youth in his wedding-clothes! And as they walked out of the church the people threw flowers upon them till the road was covered a foot thick. Yes, indeed, my dear."

She looked at me in triumph at the ending of this tale: and what an atmosphere of white tulle and bridal wreath hung about the younger Miss Lightwood! And think of being married in a land where flowers—and such flowers! stephanotis and jasmine, oleanders and frangipanni, roses and clematis—yes, and passion flowers—fell upon the road a foot thick for a bridal party to walk upon!

The elder Miss Lightwood never paid the slightest attention to these stories. She sat in shadowy silence by her window, looking out upon the serene blue water, with her hand upon the dead Captain's spy-glass.

So the days went by, and I had not heard the story of the Amphibious House with its passion-vines.

Then our weather changed; a wild fury of rain fell upon us, beating down all the scarlet and white blossoms on

the trees and drowning the islands. The dazzling white and vivid blue and green disappeared; all distant outlines were lost, and we looked out upon pastels of soft gray and green and silver rain. On one such day I went over to the Amphibious House to find the younger Miss Lightwood sitting wearily, I thought, by a little fire in the drawing-room. The elder Miss Lightwood gave me a listless hand and murmured indistinctly with restless glances out of the window. The sea ran high and turbulent, and its angry voice filled the drawing-room.

"I'm glad you came," said the younger Miss Lightwood, "Eunice gets so upset in this weather, and I—get—frightened."

She looked old and drooping, and as we sat by the fire all the afternoon, with the angry sea clamoring at the very door, I saw she was lost in old memories, and several times she shuddered, but she never spoke of what was in her mind. And it was that afternoon that I mentioned the passion-vine, which hung green and shining in the rain.

"It is strangely luxuriant there," I said, "I have never seen it grow like that anywhere else. All other verandas in the islands are overgrown with white clematis."

She looked at me then with the strange expression that had held her all afternoon—a look of haunting memory, and said, very low:

"Once—the white clematis—grew there, too."

And now passion flowers hung thick in its place!

She sat a long time silent, looking into the blaze of the little fire after that; then she suddenly rose and went over to the Chinese cabinet, unlocking its doors:

"Look!" she said, motioning to me.

To my amazement the cabinet was packed full of withered leaves and flowers. They were the leaves and flowers of white clematis vines!

Miss Lightwood stood looking at them in silence. We said nothing; but I noticed her hands shook so she could scarcely close the cabinet.

That night the rain went over, and we had some hours of beautiful moonlight.



"Don't go," Miss Lightwood had said. "It will rain again to-morrow—and—we are—so lonely."

So I stayed; and in the warm moonlight night, heavy with the odor of wet tropical flowers, Miss Lightwood and I walked up and down the red-flagged walk in the garden.

Suddenly she said:

"Do you think a person could commit a great wrong—a crime—in thought?"

I said I believed so.

"A person you would never suspect?" she asked.

"Such things had been known," I said.

Her hand lay upon my arm, and I felt her shudder, and she said, "How terrible, how terrible it must be!" She wore a lavender muslin that night—the kind that lies soft and filmy against the touch like cobwebs; there was a lace collar at her neck, fastened with an old brooch of amethysts. And I thought, looking at her in the soft tropical night, how lovely this younger Miss Lightwood must have been forty years ago—just when the elder Miss Lightwood was singing her songs of love to the strumming of her guitar, which had hung tuneless so long.

"Sometimes," she went on, faintly, "a person might do a great wrong unwittingly."

"But such a person would try to make some amends," I said, "would try to right the wrong."

"You mean by confessing it?" she said.

Then we walked up and down in the garden silently. Against a wall strange flowers gleamed in the moonlight. Miss Lightwood reached up and broke one off.

"The night-blooming cereus," she said.

In the moonlight it seemed a chalice of white wax filled with pale, palpitating flame.

"Such beauty to bloom for a few hours in darkness and die," I exclaimed in wonder.

And then Miss Lightwood said, in a curious voice, as if she had often rehearsed it:

"Would you be willing to possess the



He standing so silently

love of a life-time compressed into one immortal moment just as this flower holds all its beauty for an hour in the night?"

"That was a hard question."

"Yes," she admitted, "perhaps it is. It would all depend—and even then—even then—"

She seemed so agitated, pulling at the petals of the wonderful flower she held, that I suggested we go in to her sister.

She laid a detaining hand on my arm.

"Not yet," she said. Then added in a shaking voice: "I have never told you about—about—Eunice."

She must not tell me anything she would regret—

The petals of the wonderful flower rained upon the ground; all its heart of pale flame died upon the ground.

"Yes, yes," she said, passionately, "I must."

But after that she said no more, though we walked around the garden on the red-flagged walk for a long time, and presently we went in.

The next night she told me. The rain and wind had blown furiously all day, and we walked on the western veranda where the passion-vine hung wet and dripping.

"Will you listen if I tell you a story?" asked Miss Lightwood.

Who would not, indeed?

"The story," said Miss Lightwood, "concerns my sister and myself—and—another—"

A wind stirred the passion vine.

"Forty years ago my sister Eunice was said to be the most beautiful girl in the islands."

Oh, and think of her now!

"Among all her lovers—and she had many—was one—as handsome a man as you would ever see, who was the captain of a ship that sailed between here and Tilbury in England, but he said if Eunice would marry him he would give up the sea and settle here or there, whichever she wished. He was that in love with her!"

Far out on the sea we heard some boatman's call.

"But Eunice would never say the word. She was that coquettish. You

would not believe. The ship had sailed and returned many times, and more than a twelvemonth had gone, and yet she always put him off, laughing. She was great for laughing in those days."

Who would believe it now!

"When the ship anchored here he always came directly to see her; she knew beforehand that he was coming, for she would sight the vessel with our father's spy-glass—the one she has now."

The wind was rising; we heard it among the banana trees.

"But when he had turned into the roadway she would slip off into her boat, and then she would be far out on the water, singing and laughing. And he standing so silently—listening to her singing and laughing—standing, waiting for her. For—Eunice was worth waiting for in those days, I remember."

The wind shook the passion-vines. Miss Lightwood seemed to listen, and went on, after a pause:

"Sometimes Eunice hid in the shadows of the white clematis on the western veranda, for in those days the white clematis grew thick there. And after he had waited for her so long, she would run out of the vine shadows, laughing. Then she would bring her guitar and sing some strange, wild love songs she had learned from Jozuina, who came from Jamaica. It was enough to make a man mad."

"And I always wondered how she could act that way—to him—I felt so sorry—and I tried—to—to make up to him for it—"

For a while I could hear nothing but the rain beating against the green hanging vines, and the wind shaking the trees in the garden.

Then Miss Lightwood said:

"One night he came—the boat was to sail the next morning at daybreak—with the tide. That night he came, and they walked a long time together in the garden—"

While the younger Miss Lightwood sat in the shadows of the white clematis on the veranda.

"There they walked, he talking low—and she—I could hear—laughing."

"Then they came back, and she said, laughing: 'I'll tell you when you come

back.' And she suddenly ran from him, past where I stood in the shadows of the vines, and into the house.

"But I stayed on the veranda—because—because—"

Oh, the rain in the passion-vine!

"I heard his step on the veranda. I shrank further into the shadow of the vines; but he saw my dress and stepped forward.

"'Farewell,' he said, before I could move.

"And—there—in the shadows of the white clematis—"

She whispered it, trembling: "*He kissed me!*"

The rain seemed to be falling all around us.

"He thought he had kissed Eunice. Instantly I broke from him. I fled into the house. I did not wish him to know he had made a mistake. Why, do you think? For Eunice's sake? No! For his? No! For mine! For—I loved him!"

I thought she could not go on; but presently she said:

"I did not want Eunice to know. I did not want him to know. I was wild with a fierce joy. He had kissed me with a lover's fervor. The kiss, though meant for Eunice—belonged to me. No one knew but myself. I would not have wanted him to explain. The kiss, so long as no one knew, belonged to me.

"The next day the ship sailed. I watched it till it faded out of sight. When I came downstairs, Eunice was in the drawing-room with our father's spy-glass in her hand.

"'He has gone,' she said.

"'I saw the ship sail,' I said.

"We had never spoken much of him. Now she looked at me with her face all strangely drawn, and said 'I love him,' and dropped on her knees by the window and began to cry. I stood in the middle of the room. I never offered her any consolation. I felt as if this had happened a thousand years before. Then clear, terrible thoughts came into my mind. I was glad he was gone. Then—I wished he would never come back—never come back—"

"If he came back he would be hers.

Now he was mine. His farewell was mine—though it was not meant for me. We never mentioned him after that day. And I never told Eunice—I never told her.

"That was the year of the terrible hurricane. Coming back, within sight of the islands, his ship foundered on the reefs, and not a soul was ever found."

I could scarcely hear her.

"*Not a soul!* Then what do you think? When they told her, she fell without a sound like one dead and never spoke for months. Afterwards, she took to sitting at the window watching. And she had our house made this color, so he would more easily distinguish it when his boat came into the harbor. She thinks he will come back some day for his answer. But she'll never give it to him in this world, my dear."

The rain and the wind were tearing at the passion-vine.

"I wished he would never come back, and he never did. He never came back. In the next world he may be hers, but in this world he has been mine—mine—because he kissed me in the shadow of the white clematis. I had all the love of my life in that one immortal moment.

"But I cut down the white clematis and had the passion-vines planted. The flowers of the clematis were in the cabinet; you saw them."

A few days later I sailed for home unexpectedly, and had only time for a hasty farewell of Miss Lightwood. We sailed at night-time on account of the tide. I remember how soft and dark the tropical night was; how the stars hung in a golden drift in the black skies; and how the sea-breeze blew sweet odors of oleanders and clematis as we left the islands. Then someone pointed out a low light streaming across the water. It came from the drawing-room window of the Amphibious House, where Hetty Lightwood sat with her memories, and where Eunice Lightwood patiently waited—waited with her hand on a spy-glass, for the return of a ship which had foundered years ago on the reefs.

We could hear the surf pounding on those reefs that night.

# Holding Tommykins

A Tale of the Panama Canal Zone

BY CREDE HASKINS CALHOUN

**T**OMMYKINS was sitting in Mrs. Burke's kitchen. His full name was Thomas Adkins Brookton, but it had long been shortened by his own rattling tongue. He was eating porridge with condensed milk, and swallowing each spoonful past a hard lump that persisted in sticking inside his little throat. For two days he had been forgotten, and was wondering just now with all of his meager five years' power whether anyone would ever smile again. Since they had darkened his mamma's room and the two white, quiet nurses and a doctor had come, no one had spoken to him except in the saddest kind of voice and without a single smile. He had noticed that plump Mrs. Burke, who used always to smile, talked to him now with her eyes full of tears. His father had told him that a new little playmate was coming to their house and he wouldn't be lonesome any more.

Tommykins was glad of that because it was no fun to play alone and "make up" another little boy all the time. Make-believes are awful bores sometimes. Why everyone was sad, just when he was going to have a nice little boy or girl to play with, Tommykins could not understand.

To-night they had taken him into the darkened room to see his mamma and she looked whiter than the pillow. He had given her a kiss on the forehead just like a bird-peck. The nurse stood on one side of the bed and his papa on the other, crying. His mamma didn't cry, though; she was the bravest and the best mamma in the world. She just smiled and touched his head.

Now at last they had banished him to Mrs. Burke's, where the nurse said he must sleep.

He was beginning to nod over his

bowl when Mrs. Burke came to take him to bed. She didn't undress him, like his mamma, and she forgot his bath, but Tommykins didn't mention that. Then, as he sleepily repeated his prayer, she kneeled beside him and cried. Tommykins didn't say anything about that either. Before Mrs. Burke left, an awkwardly planted kiss adorned Tommykins' solemn little face. He only liked his mamma's kisses and hated other kinds, but he maintained his silence—and the Sand Man did the rest.

The next morning they told him that his mamma had gone away in the night to heaven.

"Is that in the States?" asked Tommykins.

"No, no, Tommy," Mrs. Burke faltered, smiling with her eyes full of tears.

"Well, everybody says they're going back to God's country, and papa told me that was the States—and why didn't mamma take me with her?" argued the child.

"You'll see your mamma some day, if you're a good boy," consoled Mrs. Burke.

"I am a good boy, only you didn't remember my bath last night, and there's black places on the sheets where I kicked," confessed the boy.

Mrs. Burke hurried away and forgot Tommykins. All day she was running between the two cottages. Tommykins used the day building a railroad of the kindling in Mrs. Burke's kitchen, and imagining that the sputtering kettle on the stove was a real steam-shovel. Once his father came and took him in his arms and covered his face with kisses that were mixed with tears. Tommykins felt that he was too big to be held like a baby and kissed by his father, but everybody had been either kissing him or crying for the last two days.



Early on the second morning after Tommykins had moved to Mrs. Burke's a long box was carried out of his house down the hill to the little temporary shack that served for a railway station, but Tommykins didn't see it. He was carefully guarded by Mrs. Burke. He saw his father's trunks go down later. Then his papa ran up the hill and told him that he was to live with Mrs. Burke for a while, and to be a good boy until papa came back from the States—and kissed him and cried. Tommykins didn't cry, but something inside his breast hurt awfully. As his father hurried down the path to his train Tommykins stood on Mrs. Burke's screened veranda, with a big rough lump in his throat. He felt like the only little boy in all Panama. He was the only one in Miraflores.

For three long days at Mrs. Burke's Tommykins was lonesome, oh, so lonesome, that sometimes he slipped into dark corners of the house and cried until his little heart was tired. He couldn't invent make-believe boys any more, because they all wanted to cry, and got homesick. For hours he sat on the veranda and counted the dirt-trains as they rumbled and screeched and clicked past on their way to dump their loads in the Pacific, at the mouth of the canal. When more trains came than he could count, he turned his attention to the lock-site and dam, the other side of the railroad tracks. He wondered about that smoking, noisy pit, from whence came shrieking of whistles, chugging of drills, ringing of bells, locomotive breathings, and occasionally sonorous blasts that shook all the houses in Miraflores. He saw dirt-trains creep out of the hole like angle-worms out of a garden path.

If the boy had read the Arabian Nights, now, he would have thought them insignificant, or at least so triflingly mysterious that he would have believed everything in the fables. Had he known what inferno meant, he would have called it a little inferno, because the highly polished disc of tropical sun made it blistering hot in that pit.

Assured that Mrs. Burke was very busy in the kitchen, Tommykins left the veranda and wandered down the hill

among the low quarters of the labor camp. He was watching a gang of black janitors scrub the barracks, and counting the tiers of bunks that rose on all sides, clear to the roof, when some one touched him familiarly on the head. Though Tommykins disliked to have strangers touch his round tow head, somehow it was different when he looked into the jolly Irish eyes of Supervisor Jones. The mite of a boy squinted at the big man, from his rock-scarred shoes and leather leggings, over his mud-stained khaki clothes to his broad felt hat, and he liked him.

"Hello," he answered, solemnly.

"Hello," returned Jones, "are you looking for a job, young man?"

Tommykins was glad that he didn't say, "my boy."

"I need a straw-boss this morning, and I believe that you're just the man for the job."

"Do you mean straw-boss on account of my hair? My mamma says it's like straw, but she's gone to heaven now."

"No, no, your hair's all right. I want a man to help me boss niggers," informed Jones as seriously as he could.

"All right, I'm tired of making railroads of Mrs. Burke's kindling," assented Tommykins.

"*Bueno*," said Jones, heartily. "Now let me have your name and I'll get you a metal check at the field office, like mine."

"Tommy 'kins Brookton."

"Tommykins Brookton," repeated Jones. "Good."

With his wee, soft hand lost in Jones' calloused fist, Tommykins crossed the tracks between two long dirt-trains, and had his first view of the big hole. He saw steam-shovels, with black smoke lifting from their engines, and white steam pouring from their long necks, and forgot to dislike the hissing noise they made as they mawed and gulped into the banks and swung over the waiting cars, where they dropped their huge mouthfuls as if they had suddenly tasted bad. As he watched the dirt-trains wriggle over the uneven track, he was unconscious of their labored breaths. The creeping channelers, and the rapidly chugging drills, making holes for the blasts, amazed him.



Their noise he forgot. The vast collection of sounds blended into a hum that was almost silence, though it was punctured at intervals by thunderous blasts. Deep down in the cut Tommykins saw a little toy train of miniature dump-cars crawling up into the light, out of a black and narrow channel, as if they had emerged from a fairy cavern. His blue eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Isn't that fine?" he asked Jones, pointing to the object of his enthusiasm.

"You bet, that's a peacherino," laughed Jones. "We'll go and take a ride on it."

In a few minutes the negro engineer of the tiny toy engine was sprawled over the tender, asleep, while Jones and Tommykins occupied the small cab. When they reached the switch at the top of the lock-foundation, Jones let the boy pull three short toots from the whistle, to signal the sleepy negro switch-boy to turn the baby switch. It was a day full of delightful experiences and surprises for Tommykins, but not one equaled the pony engine and the boy's-size railroad. At five o'clock, when all the whistles blew at once and all the noise ended in a big hush, Jones took his new straw-boss back to worried Mrs. Burke, and explained the absence.

After that, the straw-boss was on the job every day until his father came back from the States. He followed Jones from one end of the great cut between the three green mountains to the other, while the supervisor gave directions and counsel to track-foremen, powdermen, channelers, drill-runners, steam-shovel engineers and the many others employed on the big lock and dam construction. When he became sleepy and tired, he was tucked up on a cot of empty cement bags in the storehouse until the bedlam of five o'clock whistles.

The boy knew what to do when he heard the warning shrieks of the whistles that preceded the firing of a blast; he never crossed a track without looking both ways first; he always walked on the left hand track; he could throw the baby switch that shifted the pony engine; and he learned many other things that kept his wee bit of humanity from being lost

in the confusion of the Herculean task.

When his father returned, he met a little stranger. He had left a boy, and found a wise little man-creature, who had learned a new language: the talk of pile-drivers, cranemen, hog-heads and flagmen; a boy that asked intelligent questions about machines that men lived centuries without, the machines that made the gigantic canal work possible. The father did not interfere with the straw-boss, merely gave a few instructions to Jones. The Division Engineer and the straw-boss lived together in the old cottage under the direct protection of kindly Mrs. Burke. In the evenings Tommykins and his father held long and interesting discussions about the work.

It was a week after Engineer Brookton had returned from the States that their dinner seemed more lonesome and sadder than ever. Tommykins had asked a question about his mamma.

"Little sister came, Tommykins, but she didn't like it here, so she went back to heaven and took mamma with her," his father faltered.

"Maybe some day when I'm great big, like Jones, I'll go to heaven to see mamma and baby sister. I would like to go now, 'cause I didn't get to see little sister, and maybe if she'd seen me, she'd a-liked it here. Papa, what are you wipin' your glasses for, can't you see?"

"You must never forget your mamma, sonny boy, nor the prayer she taught you," answered the father, in a voice that hardly concealed his pent-up emotion.

"*Nunca*, daddy, I always say it at bed, and then I know that mamma is standing right behind me—only she aint. I can say it for you now."

"No, no, Tommykins. Did you have a good time to-day?"

"*Si, señor*, peacherino. Say, McCarthy can sure bawl out the niggers."

"Who told you that, son?"

"Jones. He says, them switch-boys aint worth a—"

"Wait, boy," interrupted his father, "you mustn't say that. I'll have to speak to Jones again."

"Don't call him down, dad," pleaded Tommykins, "he only says damn when he doesn't see me. Then he says, 'scuse me,

Tommykins, but you'd make a better switch-tender than all them boys."

The soporific effect of the heavily hot tropical night began to weigh upon Tommykins' eyelids, and he bowed his head beside his plate. The maid came and put him to bed. His father moved to a table under a hot lamp and hovered over a mass of puzzling blueprints, worrying about an unstable lock-foundation, that was weakening because of the peculiar formation of the Isthmian earth, and the wash of the daily rains. The rains were growing heavier every day and he wanted to finish excavating for the foundation before the floods of the wet season came. A sullen, torrential down-pour started as he went to bed.

The next day the foundation gave way before the night's accumulated rain. The deep, narrow channel in the middle of the cut was filling with water and, to cap the misfortune, the black driver of the toy train that moved the dirt out of the channel had taken too much rum, and was wandering the streets of Panama instead of riding his engine. A West Indian laborer will invariably fail to work, just when the minutes count most. What interest have they in the completion of the great canal? Until he could find another man, Jones was running the pony engine in order that the work need not be stopped. A civil engineer's reputation often hangs on the thinnest threads of unknown quantities—and the weather. Supervisor Jones was worried for Division Engineer Brookton, and ran the little train in and out of the narrow channel with hardly a thought of the mechanical operation of the engine.

He was returning to the pit at a good speed for such rough track, and was within a scant train-length of the switch, when he noticed that it was turned against him. "That nigger's asleep again," he flashed, as he caught his breath and quickly shut-off. Vaguely he wondered whether he would have time to jump before the toy engine was battered and crushed against the rocky side of the channel.

He turned to jump and, just as he reached the switch, saw the signal show

white. A second more would have been too late. At the same instant he saw a little form hurled from the track against the switchstand. He stopped the train and hurried back, to find Tommykins huddled against the iron, limp and unconscious. In the excitement Jones forgot that he had himself just missed disaster by the thinnest hair. He picked up the crumpled body and hailed the engineer of a dirt-train.

"Cut loose from your train and get me to the doctor as quick as you can!" he shouted, as he climbed onto the tender.

Rocking and swaying, the engine was whirled over the rough construction track to the little camp on the hill. Jones braced himself and, with his strong body, shielded Tommykins from every bump and jar. The doctor hurried across the slope from the sick camp to the Division Engineer's cottage. He stayed in the room with Tommykins until after the quick tropical night had settled over the Equator. Finally he came out onto the veranda and loosed a great sigh in the face of Jones and a circle of sad-faced construction men.

"How is he?" they asked in suppressed chorus, interrupting the doctor's surprised, "Hello."

"He isn't seriously injured," answered the doctor. "A broken arm, must have had it caught in the switch"—Jones winced—"but the shock has taken his meager reserve of vitality. If he were in any other climate, he would pull through easily enough, but this miserable place has sapped the life out of him, just the same as it has the rest of us. A man could exert his will power and fight against the shock until he rallied, but a boy just drifts along without trying."

Not a man knew the answer to a problem like this, and the doctor returned to his patient.

"Will power—and vitality," muttered Jones with a long, disconsolate pause between. "Wish I could give him mine!"

McCarthy shifted restlessly.

"Can't anybody—anybody—" he was going to say, "pray," but lost his nerve.

"I was to a see-ance once," a construction man growled, "an' we all took hands an' done strong thinkin'. I couldn't see as

anything much happened, but they said our doin' it give power to the spook lady. W'y couldn't we try it fer the kid?"

A murmur of assent flowed over the circle of shadowy forms. "We'll do it," said Jones, thickly. "Join hands, all of us, and pull together for the boy." A portentous silence drifted over the veranda.

With his heart-broken father kneeling on one side of the cot, and the anxious young doctor on the other, Tommykins lay inert, suffering and piteous. On his pale cheeks lay red fever blushes. An excited heart sent the blood surging over his body, until the veins across his temples and his thin baby arms showed blue, throbbing and distended. The fever and shock were wasting his small stock of life in useless over-work of the heart. Every little while the doctor looked at his watch and held the boy's wrist between his fingers, and let a few drops of seemingly useless medicine trickle between his lips. At intervals he gently lifted the child's eyelids. They were like white rose-petals.

At midnight Tommykins stirred faintly and his thin red lips began to move without making a sound. Suddenly he tried to sit up and cried: "There, the train's comin' an' the switch is wrong! Jones!"

He sank back upon the pillow with his father's arm around him. His red lips moved again.

"That nigger's always asleep," he muttered. "Say, McCarthy can sure bawl out the niggers." He took a long wavering breath. "J — Jones says — them-switch — boys — aint — worth — a-damn," he hurried weakly. His breath was coming shorter. "I'm a—I'm a-goin'—to—see—my—mamma." His eyes opened wide.

"Tommykins — sonny boy — wait," groaned his father.

The child closed his eyes.

"'Night, daddy," he whispered. "Where's Jones?"

Then he drifted into a deep, even-breathed sleep.

The doctor held his wrist a few seconds and then his eyes sparkled with new hope through his tears.

"He'll live, now, man; he's saved!" His right hand met the father's across the tiny cot. "It's the turn I've been waiting for," he continued. "The cool of the night did more for him than medicine, I guess. Anyway, he's safe."

The doctor tiptoed out onto the veranda and met a group of silent, dusky shapes.

"He'll live, men, he'll pull through," he whispered, excitedly.

The men stirred uneasily and shuffled their feet. Sheepishly they unclasped hands and stood ostentatiously apart.

Without a word, Jones took the doctor's hand and gave it a thankful squeeze that was more eloquent of his gratitude than words could ever be. Each man in turn gave him a rough, hearty clasp that made his hand ache with delight.

"I didn't do all of it," protested the doctor. "It was the cool night breeze and the boy's clean living that helped more than anything else." Something in the men's confused silence awakened his suspicion. "What have you men been doing?"

"Holding Tommykins," solemnly answered Jones.

A silent, happy procession of muddy, work-scarred men filed past Tommykins' cot. Some people, who have always sat in offices and worn linen collars, call them "rough necks," without knowing of their great, golden hearts. As they leaned over the white cot in the growing morning light, strong men's tears, the rarest pearls of life, fell on Tommykins' pillow from eyes that had not known a tear for years.

# A Tonic for Tired Women

BY PEARL WILKINS

Author of "Heloise and the Law of Signs," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY IRMA DEREMEAUX

MRS. LATHROP, like Tragedy *dés-habillée*, her wet pink calico dress streaked with bluing, soap-sud-soaked hands hanging by her sides, traces in her face of breathless anger, utter fatigue and dumb despair, stood looking down on what had once been her violet bed—scratched out, torn out, rooted out for the Monday morning *déjeuner* of a half-dozen buff Leghorns, a Rhode Island red pullet, and a rosecomb rooster! Along the picket-fence, blind to the open gate, they still spluttered wildly up and down, and Mrs. Lathrop viciously "sicked" black-and-white Toby on them. She wished he would kill them!

There had been two turnip beds and three lettuce beds, and two of radishes, and two of onions and half an acre of pole beans, and *one* violet bed. But there would be no violets.

Mrs. Lathrop's lips felt parched, and at that instant the ruin of her violet bed seemed not the work of rosecombs and Rhode Island Reds, but the last of a never-ending series of practical jokes sprung by a brutal Fate. What was there in "Thorns and Orange Blossoms," "Hill's Manual," or "The Book of Job" that could apply to this?

There was a moment during which her passionate gaze took an inventory of all the shabbiness around her: the sagging, fog-veiled sky, plowed fields crowding the yard fence, unpainted porch, windows showing patched curtains, rain streaked walls, a potato patch where might have been a lawn, cabbage plants set out in place of carnations, turnips for tulips, pole beans for passion vines. A garden for a Vegetarian! To one who loved Beauty for its own sake, as unornamental as a washstand in a parlor.

Mrs. Lathrop flung her apron over her head.

"Oh, I'm sick, *sick*, SICK!" she sobbed bitterly.

The shivery wind numbed her—almost everything she saw seemed to be flaunting itself unsympathetically against her; the back yard, where flapped three lines of freshly washed clothes, a pink percale sleeve, a blue denim "jumper," and a turkey-red tablecloth waved at her thanklessly. In the chicken-yard the destructive rosecomb rooster perched upon the fence and crowed three times derisively. Only Toby, who, after chasing out the intruding hens, had lain down to dog-dreams, was roused out of them by her strange actions and, going up to her, pawed her skirt and whimpered uneasily. He did not know, what his master, or the blacksmith who shod his master's horses, or the Union Iron Works' salesman from whom the blacksmith ordered the shoes, the Iron Works' President, or the President's titled son-in-law could have told him: that women from the era of Eve down, have wept thus over misfit Paris dresses, broken Majolica vases, or because they happened to jab themselves with their jeweled hat-pins.

And to Mrs. Lathrop's account that morning could have been set down: breakfast at 4:30 A. M.; dishes washed, four cows milked, chickens fed, lunch put up for three men going to Erie and four children going to school, beds made, kitchen swept, fifty gallons of water pumped and a wash of fifty-six pieces washed, wrung out and hung up. There was yet to scrub the kitchen, finish Zelma's blue gingham, make a flannel chest protector for Eddie, gather the eggs, and get supper. Back of that was last Saturday's baking, and last Friday's sweeping, and last week's garden making, and last spring's house cleaning, and last year's measles, and year before last's



Whooping Cough and Diphtheria and the Drought and the Mortgage and the Fruit Blight and the Plague of Grasshoppers and 3x19x365 meals with no discount for holidays or Sundays. Then to cry over a scratched-out flower bed! Women are so inconsistent!

But it is a terrible waste of time to indulge in "tears, idle tears," at 9:30 in the morning, when you might better be raking the yard, or churning or mopping the kitchen floor.

Mrs. Lathrop was in the act of wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron, preparatory to taking up "the burden of life" again, when Toby jumped up and ran to the gate wildly barking.

She dropped her apron hastily and saw a red motor car at the gate and a young man in a gray hat and a long gray automobile coat coming up the walk.

For an instant, tear-stained, bluing-stained, draggled as she was, she felt tempted to run. But he gave her no time. He flicked a gray glove at the boisterously yelping Toby and took off his hat to her.

"Good-morning," he said, cheerfully. "I had a salt pork breakfast this morning and it's given me an awful thirst. Could I get a drink of water?"

Mrs. Lathrop did not smile. "The pump's around at the other side of the house," she said dispiritedly, and led the way, acutely conscious of her muddied calf-skin shoes, sagging skirt, and reddened hands. They stepped upon the porch.

"I'll get you a glass," she said, dully.

"Please don't." He filled the tin dipper and drank; then with it still in his hand he turned. "Do you think I could make it to Sauk City by the new gravelled road, or must I go round by the old Half-Mile Bridge road?" he asked the lady of the house.

She reddened faintly. "I—I don't know. I've never been to Sauk City by the new road, nor by the old one for a long time—twelve years; so I couldn't say which would be the best. If my husband or any of the hired men or the children were home, they could tell you. But the men have gone to Erie for the day and the children are at school."

"Oh, it doesn't matter much," declared the young man, easily. "It's only a difference of two or three miles anyway, and I don't care if I *do* miss the parade."

"Parade?" said Mrs. Lathrop, absently.

"Yes, Sauk City and vicinity are to witness the spring opening of Rubert & Heintz' 'Greatest Show on Earth' today. Is it possible you haven't heard about it?"

"No. I was to a circus once when I was ten years old and never have been since."

Something in her tone or perhaps her tear-reddened eyes seemed to arrest the young man's attention. Mrs. Lathrop did not know how sick with discouragement she appeared. He looked at her seriously. He had gray eyes—quiet as quiet water—surgeon's eyes. Not until he seemed to have satisfied himself of the correct diagnosis of her case, did he carefully invert the tin dipper over the top of the pump and speak.

Then he said: "I hope I'm breaking it to you gently, but the lady down at the adjacent house—the fat one, Mrs.—Mrs. What's-her-name? has been suddenly taken ill and they sent a hurry call for you. I didn't want to tell you too suddenly and don't go all to pieces, please. I'm to take you back there in my machine. They want you as quick as ever you can come!"

"Do you mean Sadie Barstowe's sent for me? Why, she was over here only yesterday—"

"Barstowe's" the name. The lady's sandy haired son came out and hailed me as I was going by."

"She hasn't any sons. It must have been Si Jordon, the hired man. Have they sent for the doctor yet? Oh, I must hurry—"

Mrs. Lathrop began to tremble all over.

The young stranger remained calm.

"Now, don't work up a case on your own account. What good will you be able to do, if you do? Just take your time about getting ready. The lady's probably scared worse than she's hurt, anyway."





Mrs. Lathrop viciously "sicked" Toby on them

It was not until she was in the car with him, dress changed, hair smoothed back, her figure enveloped in her shabby "cravenette" and black button gloves encasing her worn hands, that Margaret Lathrop thought to ask a question.

"Was it Sadie's stomach that went wrong?" she asked, nervously.

They were speeding down the country road at a smart clip, the young man skillfully manipulating the steering apparatus so as to avoid the puddles.

"Er—" he said, smiling down on her. "Well, it was either her stomach or her heart, or her liver!"

"Oh," said Mrs. Lathrop, stiffly.

At this moment the sun broke suddenly through the fog, the banks of it rolled magically away, and a chorus of meadow larks—poised on the barb-wire fence along the road—as if by one impulse, soared heavenward, fluting delirious notes of joy.

The young man at the wheel affected to be dazzled.

"Lo! the Prodigal Sun!" he exclaimed. "It's time he was making his return. Glad to see you back, old man! It's going to be a bright day for the 'Spring Opening' after all."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Lathrop. "I nearly forgot you were on your way to the circus. You *will* miss the parade now. It's too bad you had to be put out so. But Sadie—"

She suddenly grabbed the young stranger's arm.

"You've taken the wrong turn," she cried, excitedly. "This isn't the road, it's the other one!"

He didn't answer, but leaning forward, he pressed his foot on a pedal and they seemed to fly ahead at a rate of speed that snatched Mrs. Lathrop's breath away.

She raised her voice.

"Didn't you hear me? This isn't the road to Sadie's—"

Then he said, very distinctly:

*"We aren't going to Sadie's! She wouldn't want to see us. She and her sandy haired hired man are this very minute putting out onion sets!"*

Mrs. Lathrop screamed: "Do you mean to tell me that you—that Sadie isn't sick!"

"Not unless she's been seized with a cramp within the last half hour. When I passed her house about half an hour ago, she was manipulating a hoe and looking the picture of health."

"Then let me out!"

"My dear madam, don't go into hysterics. I have a stepmother, two grandmothers, a half-sister and a lady-love, bless her, and can give other references."

But Mrs. Lathrop was now thoroughly alarmed. *"What are you talking about?"* she cried, trembling.

"Don't, don't, don't look that way! I'm neither an Apache on the warpath nor an Alumnus from the State Bug-House, nor drunk, nor fleeing from the scene of my latest crime. To enlighten you in the fewest words possible: I'm only kidnaping a chaperon. I want your help."

"My—help?"

"Good heavens, I *have* frightened you out of your wits, haven't I? I didn't mean to. Here now, you don't still believe I'm crazy, do you, or that I'm going to eat you?"

"No—o."

"That's better. Well, here goes, then. I'm Vance Van Arsdale. My dad's President of the Eureka Smelting Co., and I've been buried alive over in Eureka Cañon for five mortal months, looking after things. Did you ever hear of anybody traveling fifty miles to see a circus? Well, I never thought I would, but 'there's a reason.' My girl's grand-dad has business to-day in that little burg—you know its name—twenty miles below Sauk City. *She's* coming with him as far as Sauk City. I'm to meet the train and take her to the circus."

Mrs. Lathrop was beginning to breathe again; but she was still bewildered and resentful.

"What have I got to do with that?"

"Her grand-dad, the old fossil, is a great stickler for propriety. He promised he'd hand her over to me at Sauk City, provided I provided a chaperon. I wrote him that my Aunt Harriet would be with me."

"Well?"

"I have no Aunt Harriet."

"I don't see—"

"We don't, either. It's only grandpapa who sees the necessity of a chaperon. He wouldn't let her get off the train if he discovered me to be alone. And I haven't seen her for five months, and next week she goes South! *You've* got to be Aunt Harriet."

They bumped wildly over a log.

"I!" exclaimed Mrs. Lathrop, in a tone tremulous with anger and excitement. "I couldn't be—and I won't help you deceive anybody like that! You turn right around and take me home!"

"Madam, you don't seem to appreciate the fact that I'm desperate. Haven't you ever read 'Parted at the Altar' or 'Married at Midnight,' or any of those classics? Don't you know that every man, woman, and child is bound to stand by, aid, protect, and abet, lovers in distress? Please be my Aunt Harriet. You don't know what a lovely nephew I'll make. I'll promise you you'll never regret the relationship."

"I—I wouldn't know how to act!"

"Act! Why, you wouldn't have to act. Just be yourself."

"But Mr. Lathrop and the children will come home and won't know what's become of me."

"I forgot to tell you, that while you were changing your dress I tacked up a notice on the door, saying you'd gone to your neighbor's, Mrs. Barstowe's, for the day!"

"You took a lot for granted, young man."

"I did," humbly. "But please don't call me 'young man.' I'm your favorite nephew Vance, you know, Aunt Harriet."

"I haven't said I'd be her yet. I'm not dressed to go to Sauk City or to a circus."

"If that's all that's worrying you!"



Mrs. Lathrop had nothing to say about it

The light of a sudden inspiration flashed into young Mr. Van Arsdale's gray eyes. "Just leave that to your nephew! You will be my Aunt Harriet just for to-day, wont you?"

He had a taking smile, this cheerful young buccaneer. Mrs. Lathrop looked up. The clouds were like little broken bits of angel-food-cake, the spaces between blue as robin's eggs, the sunshine golden as dandelion wine. The car ran smoothly and the road stretched ahead green bordered and inviting. She had never ridden in an automobile before. All tedious cares and fatigues suddenly slipped from her. She drew a long breath.

"Yes, I will!" she promised recklessly.

Her nephew celebrated with a burst of speed that made her gasp. He drew off his left hand glove.

"Excuse my left hand," he cried above the noise of the cylinders, "but shake hands. You're a dead game sport!"

It seemed to her only a little while before the Steam Thresher and Horse Liniment Ads. gave way to a rosy picture gallery of dappled steeds clearing hurdles, gauzy skirted ladies directing performing dogs, painted clowns in pointed caps, and more than life-size photos of the Fat Lady, the Living Skeleton, the Wild Man, "Wallace," the largest Lion in Captivity, and lastly, the spires and buildings of Sauk City came into view.

"Begins to look quite circusy, doesn't it, Aunt Harriet?" commented Vance.

With warning "honks" they sped down "Central" Street. It was swarming.

"'Pears as if everybody's come to town to see the circus!" Vance said cheerfully, as they stopped before the imposing front of Sauk City's largest "Cloak and Suit Emporium."

"Will you get out here, Aunt Harriet, please?"

He beckoned to a freckled-faced boy:

"Hello, Sport! Here's a dime for a retainer and would you mind holding down my machine till I reappear and hand over the rest of your fee? All right.

"Come, Aunt Harriet."

Inside the store he left her for a few moments while he consulted with some one in the regions unknown.

He came back accompanied by a tall, red-haired girl whom he introduced as "Miss Walsh."

"This lady," he explained to the girl, "is my Aunt Harriet, whom I kidnaped in her working clothes, and as she objects to going with me to the circus in them, I want you to fit her out in holiday attire, regardless of expense. I'll be back in an hour to approve the result. Till then—ladies, good-by!"

He swiftly disappeared.

The red-haired girl smiled, revealing several gold front teeth.

"So it's a surprise party for you, is it?" she queried, amused at the lady's evident bewilderment. "Well, he's the kind of a nephew to have. Just step this way, please."

"This way" proved to lead to a department in charge of a blonde, "Nellie," in a black skirt and a lingerie waist.

"Nellie," commanded "Miss Walsh," grandly, "trot out the swellest 'tailored suits' you've got."

At her customer's breathless protest, she laughed.

"That's all right, Nellie," she said to the blonde girl. "Don't pay any attention to what *she* says. She's got a Santa Claus nephew down stairs with a roll like the Fat Lady's arm. He's going to take her to the circus this afternoon and he wants her rigged out in style. Get a move on, Nellie. We've only got an hour to do it in!"

Nellie proceeded to move.

She pressed into service another girl and the three of them dazed Mrs. Lathrop with "elephant gray" suits, and "sage greens" and "plums" and "mustards" and "resedas," until she grew afraid she had fallen asleep over a Cloak and Suit catalogue and would wake up presently and find herself dreaming.

As she was too bewildered to make a choice, the red-haired girl made it for her.

"Let's take the brown broad-cloth," she said.

"But—oh, you don't know the circumstances. I can't take—"



"No 'buts!' " firmly waved aside the capable "Miss Walsh." "I've had my orders, and I'm going to carry 'em out. We'll fix you up so your mother wont know you. Nell!" she ordered the blonde girl, "you got to help us. Write out a transfer and go down to Sallie's counter and get one of them Irish lace jabots, and a pair of brown gloves, and a brown dotted veil, and a belt, and have Gwen drag that brown taffeta silk petticoat out of the window, and tell Mr. Clark to send up a couple pair of brown cloth top shoes—number H's. Is that right, madam? Yes, H's then, Nell, and—hurry up."

Mrs. Lathrop struggled for speech.

"Now, don't begin to argue," commanded the red-headed girl. "We've got no time to argue. We got to pick out a hat and some kind of waist yet."

The hat was picked out; also the waist. Mrs. Lathrop had nothing to say about them. The red-headed girl, finding she had forgotten something, dispatched a cash girl for a veil-pin, a pair of brown silk hose, and a lace trimmed handkerchief.

On the way to the dressing-room they met "Nellie" burdened with unwrapped articles of wearing apparel.

"You look like a Xmas tree, Nell," giggled the red-haired girl.

They locked the dressing-room door, and before Mrs. Lathrop could get her breath, her "home clothes" were hustled into a suit-case (charged to Mr. Van Arsdale) and the two girls were fluffing her hair, smoothing out the lines in her face with a sweet smelling paste, powdering her, perfuming her with violet extract, buttoning her into the lace waist, slipping the silk petticoat over her head, hooking up her skirt, fastening her belt, and finally, when she was all ready, even to the hat, gloves, and veil, they told her to look at herself!

And she looked! For a moment she thought one of the dolly ladies in the show-windows downstairs had been smuggled into the dressing-room, and then something got into her eyes so that she could not see at all.

And the red-haired girl in a panic shook her arm.

"Here, for heaven's sake," she cried, "do you want to spoil your new veil?"

But her own green eyes were strangely misty.

"And now," she said, "we'll go down and see what the Santa Claus nephew has to say."

"The Santa Claus nephew" did not recognize his rejuvenated "aunt" at first.

"Whew!" he whistled, when he had somewhat recovered. "But you ladies are the lightning change artists! Nobody'll believe me when I call you 'Aunt' now, Aunt Harriet. Guess I'll have to pass you off as my big sister."

"You see," said the red-haired girl, immensely pleased, "what a difference clothes make. Don't she show some class now, though?"

"Indeed she does," declared the young man, and he handed the red-headed girl something.

"Thanks!" she said. "Thanks, ever so much."

But "Aunt Harriet," for all her "class," was looking rather embarrassed.

"I guess you think—"

But Vance would not let her finish.

"—that I'll be the envied escort of two of the prettiest ladies to be found in all Sauk City this afternoon? Well, if you think that, you've guessed right."

"Oh, no—but these clothes—I oughtn't—"

She was very near to tears.

"Now, Aunt Harriet, circumstances alter cases. Think of what you are going to do for me!" He hastily consulted his watch. "My word! We'll have to hurry some. That train we're to meet will be here in five minutes."

But it wasn't, of course; that would have been to upset all the traditions of circus-day, anywhere. The train was a whole hour late.

When it finally did appear, being an excursion train, it was packed, and they searched one car after another without finding the two they were expecting.

Vance was beginning to turn pale.

"I don't believe they've come," he was saying forlornly, when a little gray gloved hand appeared on his sleeve. "Looking for someone?" inquired a gay high voice.





Mrs. Lathrop sat there like one entranced

And it was *she*!

"Oh, Eva!" cried Vance. "Eva!"

Few parents have second sight; that's why their Juanitas turn out blondes, their Violets weigh 200 pounds, and their Phyllises go on the stage. Eva was a tall, stunning brunette. She had a serious brow and one big dimple in her left cheek to contradict it; she was five feet six, but her nose was tip-tilted, her eyes were very black, and her skin very white, and she wore Quaker gray and a red hat!

"Well, Vance," she cried, "have the trials and tribulations of five months so marred and wasted me that you do not recognize me? I'm glad to see you."

"Thanks!" responded that young man grabbing both her hands. "I'm rather glad to see you."

Then they regained consciousness.

Vance turned to the brown garbed lady at his side.

"Aunt Harriet, this is Eva," he elucidated. "Eva, my Aunt Harriet. Why,

where's grand-dad? Isn't he going to get off and shake hands?"

"Give us time to get our breath, you boy! I didn't know you had an Aunt Harriet."

Nevertheless Eva held out her hand to the lady with winning friendliness.

"Where's your grand-dad?" demanded Vance again.

"Home—with tonsilitis."

"You don't mean to say you came alone?"

"I did; and nobody ate me up, or picked my pocket, or stole my ticket, or put me off at the wrong station. Jenkins was coming with me, but her sister's house burned down last night and they wanted her to be there. So Grand-dad sent me by myself, since it was *you* who wanted to see me. He said that he knew you'd take as good if not better care of his girl than he would himself, and you reminded him a lot of himself when he was a young man and he sends you his very best regards and—me, for a day!"

But Vance was fearfully regarding his Aunt Harriet and his face was very red.

"Er—Good Heavens!" he mumbled. "Hasn't he changed his opinion of me a lot?"

"Why, Vance Van Arsdale! You know he's always held you up as a model—"

"Eva!" Vance grimaced wildly, and looked around as if for help. Then he cried: "Great Scott! somebody's running off with our machine. Fly for your lives!"

The people he had indicated, however, were getting into a green car; theirs was a *red* one.

"Are you color-blind, Vance?" quizzed Miss Eva. He was bundling her into the rear seat beside "Aunt Harriet."

"Where to, now?" she asked.

"To lunch. And I hope you both like spring chicken and creamed potatoes and lettuce salad and layer cake and yellow jonquils on the table."

After lunch, they went to the circus. We have all been to circuses; this wasn't one of the "so-different" kind. The zebras were striped; the sawdust was like other sawdust, the Roman chariots did not have canopy tops.

But Eva declared it was the most gorgeous one she had ever seen in her life, and Mrs. Lathrop sat through it like one entranced. The tiers on tiers of faces, the fanfare of trumpets, the beating of drums, the tinsel, the spangles, the trapeze performers, the Japanese jugglers—she had seen nothing like them, dreamed of nothing like them for twenty years.

The afternoon performance was over at 4:40, which gave Eva a margin of something like ten minutes to catch her train. They had hoped it would be late again, but should have known trains are never late when you want them to be. It is only when you are marooned at Station B., one hundred miles from nowhere, on a cold morning with an unreadable magazine, that the train is three hours late. Eva's train, just for spite, beat the schedule a few minutes.

While Vance was putting her on the train and making his farewell, Mrs. Lathrop sat in the red automobile and watched half of Sauk City say good-by to its aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, nephews, neighbors and friends who'd been to the circus.

Well, she had been to the circus, too. She felt a little tired and oddly enough, at the same time very, very rested.

"All aboard!" sang out the conductor.

The train moved; out of the rapidly passing windows leaned forth a dainty, gray garbed figure crowned with a red hat.

"Good-by, good-by, Aunt Harriet, dear!" cried Eva waving her scrap of lace handkerchief.

"Good-by, blessed child," called back Mrs. Lathrop.

A moment later she looked down to find Vance standing near the machine.

He smiled, and then sighed.

"It's been a great day, hasn't it?" he said boyishly. "But it's over now. Would you like to stay and have supper with me or shall we start home at once?"

Mrs. Lathrop experienced a conscience prick.

"Oh, we'd better start home, I think. My folks—"

The best of fairy tales must end.

In something like an hour and a half, the red automobile, having covered the intervening miles like Jack the Giant Killer in his Seven League Boots, returned the truant from housework to her own doorstep, from where, nine hours before, she had set out in her faded "cravenette," felt hat and black cotton gloves.

Toby's furious barking in the cow-lot, the clanking noise that one of the hired men, unaccustomed to his task, was making with the milk pails, the bawling of the unfed calves, the rattle of pots and pans from the kitchen where Zelma was evidently struggling with supper-getting, drowned out the droning noise of the automobile.

It was quite dark. Overhead in the depths of the dark blue sky the stars were blooming out. In the house the lamps had been lighted. The curtains in the dining-room were up, affording a glimpse of Hiram Lathrop hunched over his newspaper. An odor of frying pork floated out on the soft evening air.

Mrs. Lathrop drew a long breath; she was back again where she had left off.

Vance's voice, as, after helping her alight, he handed her her suit-case, almost startled her. It had been a rather silent ride.

"Well, Aunt Harriet, do you still regret the relationship?"

"How could I? I've had a beautiful day."

"I'm glad. You were a bully chaperon."

Not for the first time that day a certain suspicion flashed into Mrs. Lathrop's mind.

"I don't believe you wanted a chaperon. I believe you made it all up about the—"

"Now, Aunt Harriet! you were never cut out for a detective! Besides, I mustn't stay any longer. I've got twenty-five more miles to cover to-night. If Eva and I ever send you—an invitation to something in June, some day—you'll come, won't you? Yes, you will, and can! I'm your favorite nephew, remember!"

He held out his hand. "Good-by, Aunt Harriet. Be good to yourself and don't work too hard and don't ever again wear that terrible look of discouragement you had this morning. Just for luck, I'm going to—kiss you!"

He did—and was gone.

She leaned dizzily against the gatepost. The little spring breeze blew up cool; in the back yard, her three lines of clothes still flapped; from the direction of the house came the angry voice of her husband, alternating with shouts from the boys, and there was an insistent odor of frying pork. Yet she felt she would never mind any of these things any more. In another moment must come explanations, recriminations, heavy anger and surly disbelief. But in her eyes were happy tears. From her lace trimmed waist came the odor of violet extract, and when she moved, her silk skirts rustled. It's when romance deserts us that life loses its savor. For Mrs. Lathrop the savor had returned. Grasping her suit-case in one hand and her silk skirts in the other, she opened the gate and rustled up the walk to the house.



The automobile covered the miles like Jack the Giant Killer



Minnaveive Markham cast her violet eyes upon him

## The Sob Sister's Man

BY EARL DERR BIGGERS

Author of "The Cruel Town," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

**E**VEN to this day I remember Percy Myers as the man who had no chin. A number of years have passed since he grew the scraggly, pitiful beard that should have concealed from the world Nature's warning to those who might look to him for manliness or courage, but I still see him as I knew him first—weak, swimming eyes, delicate nose, cupid's bow mouth, and a chin that was never a feature, but only an unimportant incident in the make-up of his face.

Myers drifted into newspaper life from a little New England college, whither he had been sent by the admiring parents who had first handicapped him with the name of Percy. When he chose a small college Percy made a fatal mistake. In a big university he might have bluffed his weak way to a diploma and "the fellowship of educated men," but at the little institution it took a wary faculty less than two years to size him up and throw him out into a world that had no need of him. He had once

written to his mother that the rush and glamor of newspaper life called him, so he drifted down to the city to inform an unsympathetic editor of the same siren voice that summoned.

It is an unfortunate conclusion that the real method in Percy's newspaper madness lay in the fact that the work of the men of the press offers excellent opportunity for dallying with the grape. From the first, Percy dallied. The real business of the day, in his eyes, came in the evening, when the last editions were on the street, and the convivial spirits of the sheet gathered at the glittering cafés—to drink their dinners down. It is a ceremony that stretches far into the night, and Percy was invariably the last into a cab.

At the office, where Percy would appear in the morning, red-eyed and weary, anywhere from an hour to four hours late, he was regarded as a harmless idiot who might do something unexpectedly good if nothing good was ex-



pected of him. Sent out to get facts, Percy often got them. Not always, but often. However, the management in those days was genial and bibulous, itself, and Percy stayed on in a glow of good fellowship. Nobody trusted him—his chin was warning enough—and when the big stories broke he was pushed into a corner; but he was worth keeping, to gather information on the Longshoremen's picnic or the Eighth Ward ball; and he gathered it faithfully—whenever he didn't bluff on it.

Now and again I caught Percy clipping one of his uninspired stories from the paper, and he confessed that he sent them occasionally to his mother. He would add, shamefacedly, that she "liked to read his stuff." His "stuff" was a collection of cheap little facts any school boy could have gathered, and I wondered sometimes if in Percy's tobacco-heart there was not a faint longing to do something some day that would really be worth the perusal of the one person who followed his work. I think there was, too, for one day into his addled brain something like an inspiration crept, and he did a half-column of "filler," that the city editor sneered at, but printed. Percy waited feverishly that forenoon for the first edition to come up from the press room, and he had an envelope already addressed in his hand.

I should like to paint in lasting colors that picture of Percy clipping his stories for the delectation of the one at home, since it must have been the last lonely link that bound him to decency. Among the men of the office he was regarded as a more or less pitiful joke. The first of the week they consorted with him for their own amusement; towards the last they avoided him studiously. For Percy could by no effort stretch his small Saturday pay over seven days, and regularly each Thursday he struck the rocks. Many a pitiful lie he circulated in order to corner enough quarters to bridge the gulf till pay day. When certain of those who had advanced life-saving silver expressed a desire for its return, Percy would pat them on the back and assure them that their money was safe, as he had them down on his list. Then he

would take out a soiled notebook and show them the list; and they would note with falling hopes that they were down on page 12, and that no names at the beginning were scratched off.

So Percy drifted weakly on to his finish, lost, hopeless, bleary, dulling constantly with fancy colored liqueurs in cute little glasses the three or four candle-power brain a mysterious Providence had bestowed upon him. Even the office boy knew that he was beyond recall, and insulted him regularly with no fear of punishment. Percy must have drawn as much as twelve dollars a week at that time, and we all knew that as long as he lasted he could draw no more. He was twenty-two years old, and the book of Hope seemed forever closed to him.

And then Minnavieve Markham cast her violet eyes upon him.

I believe the real fact was, that, lost for a word, she looked up one day from the drivel she was writing, and her eyes fell upon Percy, sitting useless in a corner. From that moment he must have known that he belonged to her.

Minnavieve's real name was Mary O'Brien, which she wisely had no desire to see printed over her stories. She was one of the lachrymose band of "sob sisters," as they are called in newspaper offices. The sob sister puts into dripping words the inner emotions of her soul—for the readers of the penny press. She interviews the actress about her gowns and the murderer about his Art, and she overflows an equal quantity of purple adjectives at sight of a blind man's dog or a noted English suffragette. Miss Markham—for the sake of the O'Briens let us preserve the disguise—was an accomplished sob sister, and Billy Ransom said that her articles sounded like rain falling upon twelve inches of snow.

Minnavieve was little, quick, and determined, and probably the thought of escape never came to Percy save as an idle dream.

The first the rest of us knew of the affair was one Monday morning when Percy crept toward the city editor and asked for two first-night theatre tickets. All the city editor's friends must have been out of town, for Percy's wish was



gratified, and the next day he bashfully handed in a review of the play that showed Minnavieve Markham's hand in every line.

A few days later Minnavieve was sent to witness a big historical pageant. There were to be history and romance and uniforms all mixed together, and she was to sit in Row Z and indulge in all sorts of picturesque emotions at the sight. She did not sit there alone with her emotions. For Percy borrowed fifteen cents from Ransom, bought a clean collar, and allowed her to take him by the hand and lead him off into fairyland.

Shortly afterwards he confided to one of the boys in the office that Minnavieve was a "remarkable little woman," and that she was doing "great stuff." The crowd hooted when Percy's words were carried to them. With a big, red-blooded horror they recoiled from the ego and the drivel that Minnavieve indulged in, in full view of the world. One or two claimed to be glad that at last she had made her selection—adding that they had been a bit nervous in Miss Markham's earlier days.

But none of us need have feared capture from Minnavieve, I thought. Somehow I was sure she wanted Percy, from the first. The rest of us were what we were—finished—with the stamp of good or bad upon us. And Percy was still wet clay, susceptible of being molded to the day his weak existence ended.

Almost at once the signs of Minnavieve's molding appeared. Percy began to shun the polished café tables above which he had drunk his cheap soul into oblivion. The jolly good fellows missed him, and commented upon his capture. They spoke scornfully of the sob sister who had robbed them of him, and said they would swear she wrote mushy poetry in private, and dreamed of the day when she should be crowned queen of a gingerale Bohemia.

Percy's 'poor little chin trembled sometimes when they taunted him with his subjection, but he kept in his new path faithfully. We were all working in those days on a paper called *The Star*, whose brief stay in this vale of tears is still remembered feelingly by those who

drew its munificent salaries. It came noisily, it tempted us away from our old positions with offers of gleaming gold. And then suddenly it passed, and left us wondering—and wishing.

The crash resounded on a Monday morning. Percy was sitting thoughtfully at his typewriter, hammering out a story.

"Say, Billy," he inquired suddenly, "how is it you spell 'equilibrium'?"

"Well," began Ransom, "my own private way of—"

He was interrupted by the city editor, a brisk, sprightly gentleman who had an abrupt manner and a biting tongue.

"See here, Myers," said that dignitary, coming up suddenly, "you needn't finish that story."

"But why not?" Percy protested. "It's a good—"

"Because," said the city editor, "there is no longer any *Star* to write for. The paper suspended an hour ago."

We all sat stunned for a moment, but it was upon Percy that the blow seemed to fall hardest. His face twitched in fear, and his eyes were the eyes of a man who sees no money awaiting him at the end of the week. As soon as the rest of us got our breaths we rushed off to the telephone booths to try and cajole our old jobs back. When we came out Percy was still sitting there like a man scheduled never to smile again.

In a few minutes Miss Markham came in, and she was greeted by a chorus of woe that apprised her of the trouble which had fallen upon the house. She only smiled in a bitter way she had.

"I knew it early this morning," she said calmly, "so I stopped at *The Press* on the way down. I go back to the old job this noon. Just came in to get the things out of my desk."

As she paused before her typewriter her eyes fell upon Percy, sitting gloomily before his unfinished story in the attitude in which the news had surprised him. For a moment she studied him, and there was pity, and, I think, a little contempt, in her glance. Then she went over and spoke to him.

The rest of the office was on its hilarious way out to drown its sorrows at a nearby fount, and Ransom and I were



ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN—

"See here, Myers, you needn't finish that story"

going over to *The Press*—which had magnanimously agreed to take us back that noon. As we were passing out, Percy ran over and borrowed a dollar from us.

"What's to become of him?" I asked thoughtfully, as we went down the stairs.

"Oh, he'll be taken care of, all right," said Billy, smiling. "A dollar is the price of a marriage license in this state."

Billy was right. That dark morning Minnavieve actually took the bewildered Percy by the hand and led him over to the City Hall, where he spent his borrowed dollar to be united to her in the holy bonds of matrimony. The next evening Percy came drifting into the *Press* office and told us about it. Minnavieve was sitting not far away, and she glanced at him occasionally with an air of proud proprietorship.

"She's a good little woman," he told us over and over. "She'll make me a good wife."

We thought it more likely she would make him a good husband—but kept it

to ourselves. Billy congratulated him warmly.

"But for a newly married man," he said, "that two days' beard is unbecoming. For Heaven's sake, get a shave."

Percy blushed.

"I'm—I'm growing a beard," he said. It was Minnavieve's scheme for hiding that terribly unsatisfactory chin.

Immediately after her arrival on *The Press* Minnavieve began bombarding Hayes, the city editor, for a place for Percy. Hayes was big, red-faced, profane, and he said he had no place on his sheet for spineless infants. Then he found out that Minnavieve had married Percy, and apologized, and ended—to cover his embarrassment, perhaps—by admitting Percy into the fold.

So Percy came to us, meek, anxious, but happy. The *Press* was a morning paper, so no evening drinking bouts tempted Percy now; but he seemed not to miss them at all. Every now and then he cornered one of us and told us all about the remarkable wife he had captured.

Poor Percy, he really thought that he had been the captor.

There came a weak night when he nearly fell from grace. Minnavieve had gone home early, and a bunch of us left the office together. Percy was along. At a corner where the lights of a once favored café gleamed, someone taunted him, and dared him to enter. His chin must have trembled, though Minnavieve's inspiration hid it from our sight. He stammered and flushed a moment, then accompanied the crowd inside. His drink was poured, and in his hand, when a new look came into his eyes and, pushing it aside, he turned abruptly and went out into the street. Billy and I followed, and joined him on the sidewalk.

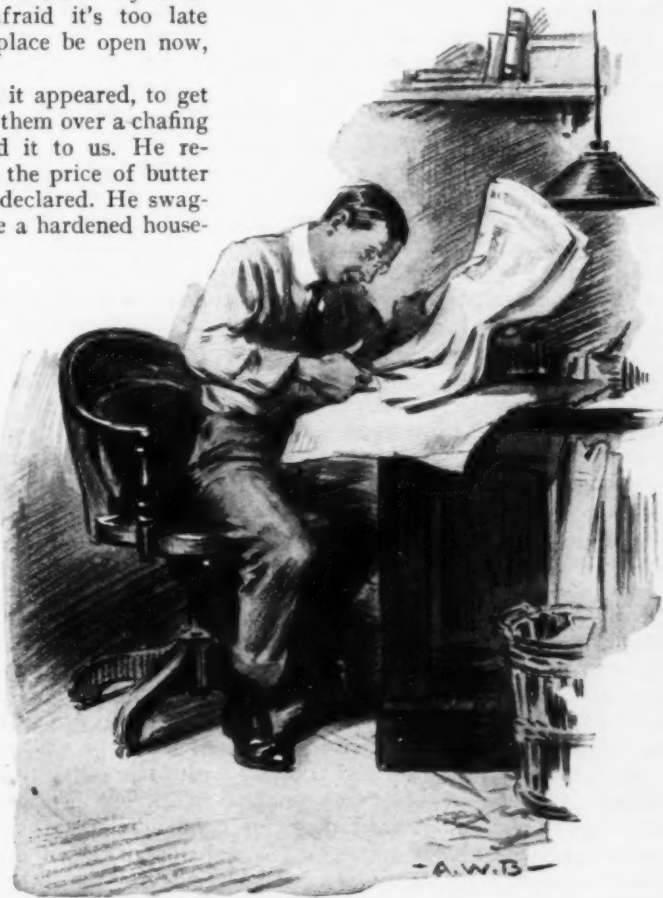
"She asked me to bring home two pounds of butter," he told us. "I just remembered it. I'm afraid it's too late now. Wouldn't any place be open now, would there, boys?"

It was her custom, it appeared, to get a midnight lunch for them over a chafing dish. Percy described it to us. He remarked on how high the price of butter was. An outrage, he declared. He swaggered, and talked like a hardened householder. We smiled at one another over his head as we passed the street lamps.

He tried to picture to us the three-room heaven she had made of an ordinary flat, and urged us to call at once and be convinced. We pleaded prior engagements — an unlikely plea at that hour. After he had left us and dodged into the darkness we discussed his heaven as it really must be. Ibsen and welsh rarebits, emotion

and hairpins, scattered all about, we wagered. Red curtains on the windows and framed verses from the Rubaiyat, decorating the walls. We shuddered, and told one another that Percy had been always lost, for so it seemed to us—lost at the outset in the allurements of rainbow liqueurs; lost even more hopelessly, now, in the clutches of his frowsy priestess of purple emotion.

This opinion was strengthened on the memorable evening when we called upon them unexpectedly. It was their day off, and Billy and I were going back to the office early, having slipped away from the dull high-brow lecture that Billy was reporting, and I was loafing at, after one good look at the black-coated human who was due to talk. Billy suggested



Clipping his stories for the delectation of the one at home

that we drop in on the Percy-and-Minnavieve establishment, and I agreed. We wanted to know just how Percy lived—the truth, horrible as it must be. And it was quite horrible enough.

We climbed to the fourth floor of their flat house and knocked. Minnavieve's voice promptly called "Come in," and we pushed open the door.

It was Minnavieve we beheld first. She was quite unforgettable. Her hair was undone and hung about her shoulders in the true emotional style. Some Japanese madman had dreamed her kimono—after a night with the *saki*. We fancied we smelled Russian cigarets—and Percy had always professed to hate them.

Minnavieve took her feet down from the radiator while we apologized for the unexpectedness of our call. She said it was all right—"one was always welcome in Bohemia," she put it—and held up her book.

"I'm reading Nietzsche," she said. "Don't you think he's lovely? I do, and so does Percy."

Our attention was thus directed to Percy for the first time. He sat not far away in restless proximity to an atrocious "cozy corner." Wrapped about him was something intended to be a dressing-gown, over which gay poppies that matched those of the wall paper ran riot. On his feet were embroidered slippers! And he held in his lap a big volume which I recognized at a glance—for Minnavieve had shown it to me at the office long ago.

It was an ungainly scrap book, and it contained clippings of all the twaddle she had written for the press.

Our hearts went out to him there, deep in his embroidered existence, branded and penned forever. There was an odor of cheap perfume in the room, and we knew that henceforth that odor must be inseparable from his life. Imagine, if you can, a worse hell for a man than his—surrounded by primroses and poppies, reading the book of his wife's sticky soul-sobs, as she had penned them for the great public to gloat over.

We looked at Percy; in wonder that he did not scream out in rebellion—but he

gazed back at us with the placid expression of a calf. Actually, he seemed happy. Minnavieve ranted on about Nietzsche—neither of us had ever heard of the gentleman before—and read us passages from his work. Every now and then she said something rather clever, which we knew she would put into print on the morrow.

So we sat for an hour, the unwilling witnesses of Percy's cruel but unconscious humiliation. And when Minnavieve had filled us with ego and rant and gush, she proposed a rarebit, and Percy got everything from the cupboard and stood holding it for her, in the attitude of the boy page who assists the famous magician. When we came away they posed arm in arm in the door, and she urged us to come back whenever we could, while Percy tried in vain to edge in a word of second to her invitation.

Out under the stars we breathed in great draughts of pure air, and looked at one another.

"Where," said Billy, "do they concoct dressing-sacks like the one he wore?"

"Over where Nietzsche lives, probably," I said.

Billy sighed.

"Poor Percy," he muttered. "Poor Percy. He's nothing more than a tidy on one of the chairs of her flat."

Two weeks later the great water-front fire burst into the headlines. It was featured in all the papers as a "two-million dollar blaze." Several lives were lost, and a number of men showed of what they were made—but in this generation everything—success or failure, achievement or calamity—is measured by money. So, if you are to be properly impressed, you must remember that this was a two-million-dollar-blaze.

It was a sizzling night at the end of a blistering day. The poor of the city were panting on fire escapes and on the grass of the parks, while everybody else panted with more dignity inside. Ransom and I were alone in the city room, discussing the administration, the weather, baseball; the weather again—and so on. Suddenly the little alarm bell above our heads rasped out its fire call. At the



same moment a telephone bell rang, and I went to roast in the booth.

"For Heaven's sake," the voice of Burkett, our water-front reporter, came over the wire, "the whole harbor's on fire. Wake up, you fellows."

I went over and, smiling sweetly into old Hayes' red, perspiring face, threw my bomb. He leaped like a madman and ran for the managing editor and an "Extra." Then he came panting back and urged Billy and me into action.

"Get a launch," he shouted. "Hire the first thing in sight." And we started out.

I have said that Billy and I were alone in the city room. So we were, practically, but Percy Myers was dawdling in a corner over something unimportant. Now he came running out, pulling on the gay little coat, of the suit Minnavieve had selected for him.

"I'm going too," he cried.

Hayes, big, mighty, and in action, gazed for a moment into Percy's pale eyes.

"You keep out of the way. D'ye hear?" he snarled.

We were already on the stairs, and after us we heard the patter of Percy's footsteps. He had deliberately disobeyed orders, and he was offensively important about it when he joined us in the street. All the way to the harbor he trotted along by our side, wishing that "she" were with us.

"She'd do great stuff on a thing like this," he puffed. "It always did take something big to inspire her."

Minnavieve was at the moment sitting amid the palms of a big up-town hotel, watching for her chance to leap out and interview a noted English novelist. Percy was for calling her up, but we throttled his suggestion. We said we wanted no purple emotions rocking the boat with us. She would, we knew, have shallow fits all over the place, and get in the way generally. Percy was enough of an encumbrance in himself, and if we had not been in such a hurry we would surely have paused to spank him and send him back to the office.

Billy knew a man who had a launch to rent, and we routed him out from his

den over a Sailors' Reading Room. Even then we could see the red of the fire flashing in the sky. But it was not until we ran down to the pier and leaped into the launch that the full glory of that two-million-dollar-blaze burst upon us. On the other side of the harbor's black waters the world seemed to be in flames. Long, lean tongues leaped savagely up into the heavens, and the old, dry warehouses and piers crackled, and sizzled, and burst into stars, like a town fireworks celebration on the Fourth of July. And in the black of the waters the whole red display lay reflected beautifully.

We made our way through the tooting, noisy, excited craft that rushed aimlessly about the harbor, and came quickly opposite the point on the shore to which the blaze had advanced. Billy Ransom had been a water-front man in his day, and knew that blazing shore-line by heart. He took a bunch of copy paper from his pocket and began to note down the buildings and piers that the flames were licking out of existence. We had swept a little away from the other craft and were passing a turn of the burning shore—when we suddenly beheld a thing that made us gasp.

Moored to a blazing pier there was a fisherman's lonely little dory, and as we slipped past it something that had been huddled up in the stern stood up and screamed. We heard its scream above the crackle of the flames and the chug-chug of our engine, and as it stood silhouetted against that awful wall of fire, we saw that it was a small and terrified boy. How he got there we did not know, and we do not know yet, but he must have climbed out over the stringers to sleep through the night, near the cooling swish of the harbor waters, and wakened to find himself moored to a pier of living flame that cooked his innermost soul.

"Put in—closer," Billy shouted, and the old man who was running our launch nodded and turned her part way about. A terrible blast of heat that swept into our very minds and dulled them, rolled out toward us over the waters. The old man hastily reversed and we backed off a





Percy stood meekly. He was finished with brave deeds

few feet. We called to him again to put in toward the shore, but made no protest when he seemed not to hear us. Some fifteen feet lay between us and that kid.

"Swim for it," we shouted.

He seemed to hear us finally, for he stood up again in that fierce heat and leaped over the side. The crimson water jumped high like liquid flame. For a moment he splashed about, and we thought he was sinking, but finally he managed to grasp the side of his boat nearest to us, and hung there, protected by the dory from the heat. We knew then that he could not swim and we sat looking at him while our skins seemed to crackle, and our brains sought vainly to resume work.

Then a funny thing happened. From somewhere in the shadow Percy Myers came creeping out, and pausing at our side, stripped off his little coat. For a moment he stood there, ridiculous, narrow-shouldered, biceps-less, weak; and we knew, somehow, that his chin trembled under that preposterous beard. Billy said afterwards that when he saw Percy posing in that crimson spot light he thought of the boy who stood on the burning deck, whence all but he had fled.

Only a second he posed, however, and the next he leaped into the red water and swam straight toward that burning hell. Every now and then he ducked his head under the water to cool it. He reached the boy's side and gripped his collar with one little white fist, and swam back with him to the launch.

We took our hero and his charge aboard and puffed our way back out of the circle of heat. Then we sort of "took stock"—stock of all our opinions and beliefs and judgments. Percy looked scared and limp and dripping and, altogether, very funny. We might have laughed, but we didn't—for we remembered that the impulse to do what Percy had done had come to neither of us until he was very nearly back to the launch—with the boy in tow.

We delivered the kid, singed, soaked, terrified still, to a waiting ambulance further down the shore, and Billy continued solemnly his collecting of data

on the blaze. As we chugged swiftly about the harbor Percy sat in the stern-sheets and shivered. In a half hour we ran across Burkett, got all the stuff he had not sent in by telephone, and received from him Hayes' telephoned order to come in and write what we had.

And then, as we turned our backs on that blazing string of water-front sheds, Percy crawled down to us and told us why he had done it. Anyone could have guessed.

She adored heroes. With all the red fervor of her shallow soul she worshipped "big, strong men," who thought nothing of leaping into danger for others. She had interviewed a lot of those fellows—to their horror, no doubt—and had always come away with heaps of warm thoughts searing her gelatine brain.

"You know it if you read her stuff," Percy told us. "She's simply wild about men who have done things—who have risked a lot for others—and I—well, I was never that sort—exactly. Sometimes at night I used to look over her book of clippings—" which made me think of the embroidered slippers and poppy-decked dressing-gown—"and read what she thought of big men who had done things. And then I would feel pretty cheap because I had never done anything worthy of a clever girl like her."

Trembling, little, spineless, afraid—and a hero! Again we might have laughed, and again we let the chance go by.

We were back in the office, grinding out our story, when Minnavieve came in to report an interview that had escaped—and saw Percy. Billy had told the boys something of Percy's conduct, and they were gathered in a group about him, fighting for the details, when she came in. Percy only shook his head when she questioned him, and claimed to have done nothing—nothing at all—in the approved manner of the heroes he had read about.

Minnavieve came over to us.

"What did he do?" she asked.

"What did he do?" repeated Billy.

"He jumped into the harbor and swam straight into a heat that would have

cooked an egg, and pulled a scared, roasting little kid back to the launch."

Minnavieve's eyes flashed, and she gave a little cry. Then she walked straight to Percy, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

Hayes stormed profanely toward us.

"Are you fellows writing that story for a weekly?" he roared.

"Mr. Hayes," said Minnavieve, suddenly, "I want to write an interview with the hero of the fire."

"Sure. Can you get it to-night?" said Hayes. "Where is he?"

Minnavieve pointed.

"He's Percy," she said. Percy blushed.

Hayes gave one look and then burst into a roar of laughter that seemed to shake the building. It was not nice of him. He leered into Percy's face, and gurgled. I hoped fervently that Percy would rise up and plant his small white fist somewhere on the red expanse of Hayes' face. But Percy stood meekly. He was finished with brave deeds for the evening.

"I guess not," said Hayes. "It wouldn't do," he added, more soberly,

"to boost one of our own men like that."

We all knew, of course, that the interview Minnavieve suggested would have been in very poor taste, but somehow we were all sorry nevertheless.

"See here, Percy," said Billy kindly, "you've done enough for the paper for one night. Why don't you go home now and change those clothes?"

Minnavieve took him in charge at these words, and led him out on their way to the flat. Before the door closed upon him, Percy smiled back at us over his shoulder.

We returned to our story—but we thought of the flat, and of Minnavieve.

Nietzsche, poppies, rant, and rarebits made us pause.

Billy looked up with the expression of a man who does not understand.

"She's as shallow," he said, "as the slush on the sidewalks in March—that reminds you so much of her stuff."

And then we were silent, wondering, for we knew that out of quite hopeless material this flaming sob sister had molded something that wanted to be a man.

## A Touch of Heat

BY MELVILLE CHATER

Author of "The Return of the Avenger," etc.

YOU might occupy an office in the Van Dyne building for a lifetime without ever once seeing the most important man in that beehive of industry. He lives in a brilliantly-lit vault of concrete walls down among the massive roots of things, far below the street level, and he is the keeper of the four steel leviathans which generate the power for the Van Dyne's thirty-odd stories of modern improvements. Beneath the electric glare in that white-walled space, one stands dazed; perspiration trickles down your face, your inhalations grow warm and weighted; the atmosphere suggests lubricating grease heated to evaporation. The only move-

ment is that of the engine's massive wheel as it whirls slingingly around, a red blur; the only sound is its dull, rhythmic roar. If you watch the wheel long enough, you can almost feel a personality back of that blind, resistless force that seems to dominate and engulf all else. The atmosphere is sucked around it in hot, heavy swirls; the finger of the brass steam-gauge sways to and fro, as if in response; even your voice, lifted over the ringing whirr, is drawn by degrees into its pitch and rhythm.

The assistant engineer, dressed in blue-jeans, undershirt and peaked cap, sits under a white slab that displays a laby-

rinth of copper switches, or strolls about smoking a corn-cob, the moisture trickling unheeded from his face and arms. He is a slim, clean-cut young fellow of alert eyes and cool, quiet speech, that betrays a complaisant humor towards all things.

"Hot?" he says, shaking the perspiration from his eyes, "Why, no, I'd call it just right to-day. Temperature? Oh, we don't trouble to keep a thermometer down here. There was one once, but she got broke; I guess the mercury jumped up and knocked a hole in her head. Of course you can always cool off out there in the hall, under the elevator shaft, where they send down the stuff for the restaurant in the front of the building, but it's an awful easy way to get pneumonia. Of course there *are* hot spells, but if the engines can stand it, we're supposed to. Number Three, there, was shut off four hours ago, but just feel her."

For an instant I laid my hand on the flank of the sleeping monster—for an instant only.

"Heat's like everything else," resumed the assistant, swabbing down Number Three with a handful of cotton-waste, in much the same manner as a groom curry-combs a horse. "You can get used to it. But once you are used to a thing, it don't pay to let yourself get unused to it again, especially if your job depends on it. That's why I never take more than a day off at a time in summer; and I wouldn't have been off all of last week, except for a fresh young ambulance surgeon landing me in Bellevue—when I was only just a bit excited. Funny, everything seemed to get mixed up, that day, and I haven't got it straight in my mind, yet, as to how it happened. They say the Chief blamed me for it, but then he was so sick he hasn't been down since. The fact is, he was a bit off his head from the heat."

The assistant clambered up on Number Three, poured a quart of thick, yellow fluid into her nickel oil-cup, then wiped his face with the greasy wad of cotton-waste and relighted his corn-cob.

"I've worked alongside of the Chief for three years, and he's a pretty easy-going sort. He treats his engines right, and when a man acts square by his en-

gines, you can bet he's mostly square. Well, seeing he'd been satisfied with a plain engineer's license for about fifty years, it was too bad he had to go and take out one of the other kind. But women are just like engines. As soon as you get fooling with one and understand her a bit, and see how she works, you want to own her right away and run her yourself. That's what the Chief did, and he picked out a little girl of about half his size and age, as pretty as a picture. Now, understand me, honeymoons are all right and proper. What I'm saying is that a man who works down here oughtn't to go off to the seashore with his bride, and let ocean breezes blow on him for two weeks in the hottest part of summer. That's what I call giving your job a chance to get the best of you. Maybe you remember those three hot days last week? They tell me the ambulances were kept busy, and the cops let people sleep in the park all night, and the fire stations used good city water to squirt on truck horses that were not in any way related to them. While that spell was on, I didn't need a chart to tell me it was warm; so how about the Chief, who'd just got back from ocean breezes?

"The first day he started in as chipper as a squirrel, but by noon he was up against the elevator shaft, with his tongue hanging out. The next morning he came in with one of those up-all-night looks, and that afternoon he began to get black under the eyes. Not a handful of work did he do, but just sat by the elevator shaft with his eyes closed, keeping busy with one of those little open-and-shut fans that a girl fools with while she's stringing you. When I asked if I could do anything for him, he shook himself, like I was a mosquito trying to settle; then he looked up and cursed me out. Yes, I was scared. Never having heard him pass a quick word before, I had a right to be.

"That night I managed to get a bit of sleep, out on the fire-escape; and coming down the avenue next morning, as early as seven o'clock, I felt the sun on my back, and says to myself, 'Here's trouble!' If I was to tell you how it felt down here that day, it would sound like a dime



novel. The walls were too hot to lean against, and everything I laid a hand to felt like warm glue. We had two engines going, under a hundred and fifteen pounds of steam, and the wind they gave off was like this Gulf Stream that you read about. When I opened the furnace doors to throw on coal, it was simply hell uncorked. All afternoon the Chief did nothing but lie in the passage and pant like a sick dog, staggering in, every now and then, for a swallow of warm water. Once he was stooping for the can when suddenly he straightens up with his hands to his head and drops over, limp as a rag. I helped him back to the passage and laid him down with my coat under his head; then I started for an ambulance. But all at once the sickest sort of feeling struck me.

"Something was buzzing through the top of my head; I shook all over like the hand of that ammeter on the wall; and just as I was figuring to lie down for a minute, I found I'd done so already, and was watching the steam pipes—that looked about a mile off, all see-sawing and spotty. It seemed like I'd fallen asleep, except that I knew all the time that my throat was full of hot sand and my breath was humping in and out, in time with the beat of the engines. By and by I began to notice things again, and my head got clearer and clearer, like an incandescent lights up, when you turn on the power. I thought I could see everybody in the building, right up to the tower; I knew exactly what the Chief was thinking about, and I could turn my own thoughts inside out as easy as you'd turn a pair of socks. More than that, everything around me, from the engines to that copper spittoon, seemed sort of alive, on the quiet, and I sized them up friendly, as you size up a crowd of people. All this time I could hear the Chief moaning and talking to himself, and all the time the hot breeze from those engines was whirling around like mad.

"By-and-by he stopped dead for a bit, then suddenly off he starts again.

" 'Ice-cream!' he says in a queer, husky whine, 'ice-cream, oh, ice-cream!'

"He just kept repeating that; and every time he said it in a different way.

First it was weak and fretty, like a kid crying for a drink; then it worked up into a regular D. T. yell, and at last it died away as soft and slick as if he'd finished a plate of the real thing and was busy licking the spoon. Say, but it was great just to lie there and listen! There was ice-cream floating all around me in pink, white and brown striped-bricks; it kept sliding down my throat, and I could switch the flavor into strawberry, vanilla or chocolate as easy as running a soda-fountain. Honest, it came so fast and cold that I got a genuine ice-cream pain in the forehead.

" 'Jim!' called the Chief, his teeth chattering so he could hardly talk. 'My Lord, Jim, something terrible's happened. I'm turning into an ice-cream brick!'

"I went over to where he was, and tried to tell him he was mistaken. But he wouldn't have it.

" 'Mistaken!' he says, between breathing on his fingers and slapping his chest. 'Don't you hear that freezer going round?'

"I might have known it was only the dynamos, but somehow I began to get chilly and nervous, myself. 'My face is strawberry,' he says—and it was red enough to be—'my legs is chocolate, and there's a section of the green sort right in the middle of my back.'

"It sounds ridiculous, but I was so scared of catching it off him that I started for that ambulance on the double-quick, when who should turn up but the Chief's wife, picking her way around in her fancy clothes as if she was on a muddy street crossing. I headed her off and told her that the Chief had gone home, being a bit under the weather. We stood there, chinning for a moment, then I helped her out and upstairs; but unfortunately I could read as plain as print that she thought I wasn't such a bad-looker, and twenty years younger than her husband. I say 'unfortunately,' because when I came back and found the Chief in the doorway, where he'd been watching us all the time; it made me feel guilty.

"Nor the look on his face didn't help any. His eyes were red and wild, his fin-



gers kept working, and he crouched like a mad dog does before he springs. It would have been an unpleasant suspicion—delusions they call 'em, don't they?—if it hadn't been so ridiculous; but a man who imagines he's turning into an ice-cream brick could imagine most anything.

"He walked back and threw one of the furnace doors open, then crept up, watching me all the while. I saw his plan plain enough, but what was the use of argument? I don't know who jumped first, but suddenly we were staggering around like a peg top, clutching each other's throats. We must have twisted in and out around the room twenty times. Sometimes I felt the hot air from those engines so close that one slip would have smashed us both into kindling. Once the wheel caught my shirt-sleeve and ripped the whole thing off my back in a flash; and next we bunked up against the switchboard, turning off a couple of hundred lights upstairs. And all the while the Chief kept whispering names through his teeth at me and his wife, and telling us what he'd do to us. At last his grip slackened and we lay side by side on the floor for awhile, gasping for breath. Then he staggered up, and I felt myself being lifted like a kid who's half asleep. I knew what was going to happen, but I wasn't interested any more; I was so far gone that I couldn't have raised a finger if the furnace had been hell itself. I didn't notice much; all I remember is that just as we got in front of that red-hot coal bed, I heard a sudden smash and clatter, out in the hall.

"It's that young fool on the freight elevator," I think to myself. "That's the third smash-up he's had, this week."

"I opened my eyes. Sure enough, the elevator had dropped; a tall, red tub had rolled out and spilled: and in front of it, right in the middle of the passage was—what do you think? A big heap of ice-cream bricks! They were the pink, white and brown sort; they kept coasting down-hill over each other, and the smoke rose off them something luscious.

"Ice-cream!" yells the Chief, dropping me forgetfully; and when I sat up,

there he was, face downward, with his arms around the heap, trying to swallow six cakes at once. Well, I took a jump and landed right in the middle of that Fourth of July dream, biting away like a mad dog. Then, before I knew it, we were both up again, laughing and yelling, waving a brick in each hand. I'd give the Chief a bite of mine and he'd give me a bite of his, just like two kids; and all we could do was to dance around each other singing, 'Ice-cream! Oh, ice-cream!' between swallows, until our voices got so hoarse with cold that you couldn't hear nothing, but you could still see our breaths.

"Then some men ran in from somewhere, and that's about all, except that when I woke up, in the psycho-something ward in Bellevue, and told them they'd got hold of the wrong man, those fool doctors just looked me up and down and said: 'Oh, yes, we know all about that!'"

The assistant stopped abruptly. From the foot of the staircase there had emerged a tall figure. Faltering, half-dazed, he picked his way towards us beneath the blinding lights. The assistant stepped forward, and they met in a sheepish hand-shake. The newcomer sank into a chair. His face was white and drawn, and his eyes shifted restively within their dark circles.

"Jim," he said, mopping his brow, "you were in bad shape that day!"

"What, me?" cried the other. "Why, Chief, it was you. Don't you remember trying to pitch me into the furnace?"

"Now, that's ridiculous!" returned the Chief, irritably. "I was as well as you are, this minute, but you carried on so that you got me excited. What was that nonsense you got off about turning into an ice-cream brick?"

The assistant shrugged, respectfully repressing a smile.

"But the joke's on me," added the Chief, grinning rather foolishly. "The truth is, I'm just out of Bellevue. They must have put me in there instead of you."

And, leaving them still in high argument, I departed.

# Why The Clock Stopped

BY ARNOLD BENNETT

Author of "The Old Wives' Tale,"  
"What The Public Wants," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BRETT

MR. MORFE and Mary Morfe, his sister, were sitting on either side of their drawing-room fire, on a Friday evening in November, when they heard a ring at the front door. They both started, and showed symptoms of nervous disturbance. They both said aloud that no doubt it was a parcel, or something of that kind, that had rung at the front door. And they both bent their eyes again on the respective books which they were reading. Then they heard voices in the lobby—the servant's voice and another voice—and a movement of steps over the encaustic tiles towards the door of the drawing-room.

And Miss Morfe ejaculated:  
"Really!"

And it was as if she were unwilling to believe that somebody on the other side of that drawing-room door contemplated committing a social outrage, but that she nevertheless began to fear the possibility.

In the ordinary course it is not considered outrageous to enter a drawing-room—even at nine o'clock at night—with the permission and encouragement of the servant in charge of portals. But the case of the Morfes was peculiar.

Mr. Morfe was a bachelor aged forty-two, and looked older. Mary Morfe was a spinster aged thirty-eight, and looked thirty-seven. Brother and sister had kept house together for twenty years. They



"I believe that clock's stopped"

were passionately and profoundly attached to each other—and did not know it. They grumbled at each other freely, and practiced no more conversation, when they were alone, than the necessities of existence demanded (even at meals they generally read), but, nevertheless, their mutual affection was tremendous. Moreover, they were very firmly fixed in their habits.

Now one of these habits was never to entertain company on Friday night. Friday night was their night of solemn privacy. The explanation of this habit offers a proof of the sentimental relations between them.

Mr. Morfe was an accountant. Indeed, he was *the* accountant in Bursley, and perhaps he knew more secrets of the

ledgers of the principal earthenware manufacturers than some of the manufacturers did themselves. But he did not live for accountancy. At five o'clock every evening he was capable of absolutely forgetting accountancy. He lived for music. He was organist at Saint Luke's Church (with an industrious understudy—for he did not always rise for breakfast on Sundays) and, more important, he was conductor of the Bursley Orphans Glee and Madrigal Club. And herein lay the origin of those Friday nights. A Glee and Madrigal Club naturally comprises women as well as men, and the women are apt to be youngish, prettyish, and somewhat fond of music. Further, the conductorship of a choir involves many and various social encounters. Now Mary Morfe was jealous. Though Richard Morfe ruled his choir with whips, though his satiric tongue was a scorpion to the choir, though he never looked twice at any woman, though she was always saying that she wished he would marry, Mary Morfe was jealous. It was Mary Morfe who had created the institution of the Friday night, and she had created it in order to prove, symbolically and spectacularly, to herself, to him, and to the world, that he and she lived for each other alone. All their friends, every member of the choir; in fact, the whole of the respectable part of Bursley, knew quite well that in the Morfes' house, Friday was sacredly Friday.

And yet a caller!

"It's a woman," murmured Mary.

Until her ear had assured her of this fact, she had seemed to be more disturbed than startled by the stir in the lobby.

And it was a woman. It was Miss Eva Harracles, one of the principal contraltos in the Glee and Madrigal Club. She entered, richly blushing, and excusably a little nervous and awkward. She was a tall, full-blooded, agreeable creature of fewer than thirty years, dark, almost handsome, with fine lips and eyes, and an effective large hat and a good muff; in every physical way a marked contrast to the thin, prim, dessicated brother and sister.

Richard Morfe flushed faintly. Mary Morfe grew more pallid.

"I really must apologize for coming in like this," said Eva, as she shook hands cordially with Mary Morfe.

She knew Mary very well indeed. For Mary was the "librarian" of the Glee and Madrigal; Mary never missed a rehearsal, though she cared no more for music than she cared for the National Debt. She was a perfect librarian, and very good at unofficially prodding indolent members into a more regular attendance, too.

"Not at all!" said Mary. "We were only reading; you aren't disturbing us in the least." Which, though polite, was a lie.

And Eva Harracles sat down between them. And brother and sister abandoned their literature.

"I can't stop," she said, glancing at the clock immediately in front of her eyes. "I must catch the last car for Silverhays—"

"You've got twenty minutes yet," said Mr. Morfe.

"Because," said Eva, "I don't want that walk from Turnhill to Silverhays on a dark night like this."

"No, I should think not indeed," said Mary Morfe.

"You've got a full twenty minutes," Mr. Morfe repeated. The clock showed three minutes past nine.

The electric cars to and from the town of Turnhill were rumbling past the very door of the Morfes every five minutes, and would continue to do so till midnight. But Silverhays is a mining village a couple of miles beyond Turnhill, and the service between Turnhill and Silverhays ceases before ten o'clock. Eva's father was a colliery manager who lived on the outskirts of Silverhays.

"I've got a piece of news," said Eva.

"Yes?" said Mary Morfe.

Mr. Morfe was taciturn. He stooped to nourish the fire.

"About Mr. Loggerheads," said Eva, and stared straight at Mary Morfe.

"About Mr. Loggerheads!" Mary Morfe echoed, and stared back at Eva. And the atmosphere seemed to have been thrown into a strange pulsation.

Here, perhaps, I ought to explain that it was not the peculiarity of Mr. Loggerheads' name that produced the odd effect. Loggerheads is a local term for a harmless plant called the knapweed (*centaurea nigra*), and it is also the appellation of a place and of quite excellent people, and no one regards it as even the least bit odd.

"I'm told," said Eva, "that he's going into the Hanbridge Choir!"

Mr. Loggerheads was the principal tenor of the Bursley Glee and Madrigal Club. And he was reckoned one of the finest "after-dinner tenors" in the Five Towns. The Hanbridge Choir was a rival organization, a vast and powerful affair that fascinated and swallowed promising singers from all the choirs of the vicinity. The Hanbridge Choir had sung at Windsor, and since that event there had been no holding it. All other choirs hated it with a homicidal hatred.

"I'm told," Eva proceeded, "that the Birmingham and Sheffield Bank will promote him to the cashiership of the Hanbridge Branch on the understanding that he joins the Hanbridge Choir. Shows what influence they have! And it shows how badly the Hanbridge Choir wants him."

(Mr. Loggerheads was cashier of the Bursley branch of the Birmingham and Sheffield Bank.)

"Who told you?" asked Mary Morfe.

Richard Morfe said nothing. The machinations of the managers of the Hanbridge Choir always depressed and disgusted him into silence.

"Oh!" said Eva Harracles. "It's all about. Everyone's talking of it."

"And do they say Mr. Loggerheads has accepted?" Mary demanded.

"Yes," said Eva.

"Well," said Mary, "it's not true! A mistake!" she added.

"How do you know it isn't true?" Mr. Morfe, inquired doubtfully.

"Since you're so curious," said Mary defiantly, "Mr. Loggerheads told me himself."

"When?"

"The other day."

"You never said anything to me," protested Mr. Morfe.

"It didn't occur to me," Mary replied.

"Well, I'm very glad!" remarked Eva Harracles. "But I thought I ought to let you know at once what was being said."

Mary Morfe's expression conveyed the fact that in her opinion Eva Harracles' evening call was a vain thing, too lightly undertaken, and conceivably lacking in the nicest discretion. Whereupon Mr. Morfe was evidently struck by the advisability of completely changing the subject. And he did change it. He began to talk about certain difficulties in the choral parts of Havergal Brian's "Vision of Cleopatra," a work which he meant the Bursley Glee and Madrigal Club to perform, though it should perish in the attempt. Growing excited, in his dry way, concerning the merits of this composition, he rose from his easy chair and went to search for it. Before doing so he looked at the clock, which indicated twenty minutes past nine.

"Am I all right for time?" asked Eva.

"Yes, you're all right," said he. "If you go when that clock strikes half-past, and take the next car down, you'll make the connection easily at Turnhill. I'll put you into the car."

"Oh, thanks!" said Eva.

Mr. Morfe kept his modern choral music beneath a broad seat under the bow window. The music was concealed by a low curtain that ran on a rod—ingenious device of Mary. He stooped down to find "The Vision of Cleopatra," and at first he could not find it. Mary walked towards that end of the drawing-room with a vague notion of helping him, and then Eva did the same, and then Mary walked back, and then Mr. Morfe happily put his hand on the "Vision of Cleopatra."

He opened the score for Eva's inspection, and began to hum passages and to point out others, and Eva also began to hum, and they hummed in concert, at intervals exclaiming against the wantonness with which Havergal Brian had invented difficulties.

Eva glanced at the clock.

"You're all right," Mr. Morfe assured her, somewhat impatiently. And



"And so the clock stopped," observed Simon Loggerheads

he, too, glanced at the clock: "You've still nearly ten minutes."

And he proceeded with his critical and explanatory comments on the "Vision of Cleopatra."

He was capable of becoming almost delirious about music. Mary Morfe had seated herself in silence.

At last Eva and Mr. Morfe approached the fire and the mantelpiece again. Mr. Morfe shut up the score, dismissed his delirium, and looked at the clock, quite prepared to see it pointing to twenty-nine and a half minutes past nine. Instead, the clock pointed to only twenty-two minutes past nine.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. He went nearer.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, rather more loudly. "I do believe that clock's stopped!"

It had. The pendulum hung perpendicular, motionless, dead.

He was astounded. For the clock had never been known to stop. It was a presentation clock, of the highest guaranteed quality, offered to him as a small token of regard and esteem by the members of the Bursley Orphans Glee and Madrigal Society to celebrate the twelfth anniversary of his felicitous connection with the said Society. It had stood on his mantelpiece for four years, and had earned an absolutely first-class reputation for itself. He wound it up on the last day of every month, for it was a thirty-odd day clock, especially made by a famous local expert: and he had not known it to vary more than ten minutes a month at the most. And lo! it had stopped in the very middle of the month!

"Did you wind it up last time?" asked Mary.

"Of course!" he snapped.

He had taken out his watch and was gazing at it. He turned to Eva.



"It's twenty to ten," he said. "You've missed your connection at Turnhill—that's a certainty. I'm very sorry."

Obviously there was only one course open to a gallant man whose clock was to blame: namely, to accompany Eva Harracles to Turnhill by car, to accompany her on foot to Silverhays, then to walk back to Turnhill and come home again by car. A young woman could not be expected to perform that bleak and perhaps dangerous journey from Turnhill to Silverhays alone after ten o'clock at night in November. That was the clear course.

But he dared scarcely suggest it. He dared scarcely suggest it because of his sister. He was afraid of Mary. The names of Richard Morfe and Eva Harracles had already been coupled in the mouth of gossip. And naturally Eva Harracles herself could not suggest that Richard should sally out and leave his sister alone on this night, especially devoted to sisterliness and brotherliness. And, of course, Eva thought, Mary will never, never suggest it.

But Eva was wrong there.

To the amazement of both Richard and Eva, Mary calmly said:

"Well, Dick, the least you can do now is to see Miss Harracles home. You'll easily be able to catch the last car back from Turnhill if you start at once. I daresay I shall go to bed."

And in three minutes Richard Morfe and Eva Harracles were being sped into the night by Mary Morfe.

The Morfes' house was at the corner of Trafalgar Road and Beech Street. The cars stopped at that corner in their wild course towards the town and towards Turnhill. A car was just coming. But instead of waiting for it, Richard Morfe and Eva Harracles deliberately turned their backs on Trafalgar Road, and hurried side by side down Beech Street. Beech Street is a short street, and ends in a nondescript unlighted waste patch of ground.

They arrived in the gloom of this patch, safe from all human inquisitiveness, and then Richard Morfe warmly kissed Eva Harracles in the mathematical center of those lips of hers. And Eva

Harracles showed no resentment of any kind, nor even shame. Yet she had been very carefully brought up. The sight would have interested Bursley immensely; it would have appealed strongly to Bursley's strong sense of the piquant—That dry old stick Dick Morfe kissing one of his contraltos in the darkness afforded by unlighted Beech Street!

"Then you hadn't told her!" murmured Eva Harracles.

"No!" said Richard, with a slight hesitation. "I was just going to begin to tell her when you called."

Another woman might have pouted to learn that her lover had exhibited even a little cowardice in informing his family that he was engaged to be married. But Eva did not pout. She comprehended the situation, and the psychology of the relations between brothers and sisters. (She herself possessed both brothers and sisters.) All the courting had been singularly secret and odd.

"I shall tell her to-morrow morning at breakfast," said Richard, firmly. "Unless, after all, she isn't gone to bed when I get back."

By a common impulse they now returned towards Trafalgar Road.

"I say," said Richard, "what made you call?"

"I was passing," said the beloved. "And somehow I couldn't help it. Of course, I knew it wasn't true about Mr. Loggerheads. But I had to think of something."

Richard was in ecstasy.

"I say," he said again, "I suppose *you* didn't put your finger against the pendulum of that clock?"

"Oh! *no!*" she replied, with emphasis.

"Well, I'm jolly glad it did stop, anyway," said Richard. "What a lark, eh?"

She agreed that the lark was ideal. They walked down the road till a car should overtake them.

"Do you think she suspects anything?" Eva asked.

"I'll swear she doesn't," said Richard, positively. "It'll be a bit of a startler for the old girl."

"No doubt you've heard," said Eva haltingly, "that Mr. Loggerheads has cast eyes on Mary."

"And do you think there's anything in that?" Richard questioned, sharply.

"Well," she said, "I really don't know." Meaning that she decidedly thought that Mary *had* been encouraging advances from Mr. Loggerheads.

"Well," said Richard, superiorly, "you may just take it from me that there's nothing in it at all—Ha!" he laughed, shortly. He knew Mary.

Then they got on a car and tried to behave as if their being together was a mere accident, as if they had not become engaged to one another within the previous twenty-four hours.

Immediately after the departure of Richard Morfe and Eva Harracles, his betrothed, from the front door of the former, Mr. Simon Loggerheads arrived at the same front door and rang thereat, and was a little surprised, and also a little unnerved, when the door opened instantly, as if by magic. Mr. Simon Loggerheads said to himself, as he saw the door move on its hinges, that Miss Morfe must have discovered a treasure of a servant who, when she had nothing else to do, spent her time on the inner door-mat waiting to admit possible visitors—even on Friday night. Nevertheless, Mr. Simon Loggerheads regretted that prompt opening, as one regrets the prompt opening of the door of a dentist.

And it was no servant who stood in front of him, under the flickering beam of the lobby-lamp. It was Mary Morfe herself. The simple explanation was that she had just sped her brother and Eva Harracles, and had remained in the lobby for the purpose of ascertaining, by means of her finger, whether the servant had as usual forgotten to dust the tops of the picture-frames.

"Oh!" said Mr. Loggerheads, when he saw Mary Morfe.

For the cashier of the Bursley Branch of the Birmingham and Sheffield Bank it was not a very able speech, but it was all he could accomplish.

And Miss Mary Morfe said:

"Oh!"

She was thirty-eight, and he was quite that (for the Bank mentioned does not elevate its men to the august situation of

cashier under less than twenty years service), and yet they neither of them had enough worldliness to behave in a reasonable manner.

Then Miss Morfe, to whom it did at last occur that something must be done, produced an invitation:

"Do come in!" And she added: "Richard has just gone out."

"Oh!" commented Mr. Simon Loggerheads again.

(After all, it must be admitted that tenors as a class have never been noted for their conversational powers.)

But he was obviously more at ease, and he went in, and Mary Morfe shut the door. At this very instant her brother and Eva were in secret converse at the end of Beech Street.

"Do take your coat off!" Mary suggested to Simon.

Simultaneously the servant appeared at the kitchen extremity of the lobby, and Mary thrust her out of sight again with the cold words:

"It's all right, Susan."

Mr. Loggerheads took his coat off, and Mary Morfe watched him as he did so. He made a pretty figure.

He was something of a dandy.

The lapels of the overcoat would have showed that, not to mention the correctly severe necktie. All his clothes, in fact, had "cut and style," even to his boots. In the Five Towns many a young man is a dandy down to the edge of his trousers, but not down to the ground.

Mr. Loggerheads looked a young man. The tranquility of his career and the quietude of his taste had preserved his youthfulness. And, further, he had the air of a successful, solid, much-respected individual. To be a cashier, though worthy, is not to be a nabob, but a bachelor can save a lot out of over twenty years of regular salary. And Mr. Loggerheads had saved quite a lot. And he had opportunities of advantageously investing his savings.

Then everybody knew him, and he knew everybody. He handed out gold at least once a week to nearly half the town, and you cannot help but venerate a man who makes a practice of handing out gold to you. And he had thrilled thou-



"Then you hadn't told her?" murmured Eva

sands with the wistful beauty of his voice in "The Sands of Dee." In a word, Simon Loggerheads was a personage, if not talkative.

They went into the drawing-room. Mary Morfe closed the door gently.

Simon Loggerheads strolled vaguely and self-consciously up to the fireplace, murmuring:

"So he's gone out!"

"Yes," said Mary Morfe, in confirmation of her first statement.

"I'm sorry!" said Simon Loggerheads, a statement which was absolutely contrary to the truth. Simon Loggerheads was deeply relieved and glad that Richard Morfe was out.

The pair, aged slightly under and slightly over forty, seemed to hover for a fraction of a second uncertainly near each other, and then, somehow, mysteriously, Simon Loggerheads had kissed Mary Morfe.

She blushed.

He blushed.

The kiss was repeated.

Mary gazed up at him.

Mary could scarcely believe that he was hers. She could scarcely believe that on the previous evening he had proposed marriage to her—rather suddenly, so it seemed to her, but delightfully. She could comprehend his conduct no better than her own. They two, staid, settled-down, both of them old maids, falling in love and behaving like lunatics!

Mary, a year ago, would have been ready to prophesy that if ever Simon Loggerheads—at his age!—did marry, he would assuredly marry something young, something ingenuous, something cream-and-rose, and probably something with rich parents. For twenty years Simon Loggerheads had been marked down for capture by the marriageable spinsters and widows, and the mothers with daughters, of Bursley. And he had evaded capture, despite the special temptations to which an after-dinner tenor is necessarily subject.

And now Mary Morfe had caught him—caught him, moreover, without having had the slightest intention of catching him. She was one of the most spinsterish spinsters in the Five Towns; and she

had often said things about men and marriage of which the recollection now, as an affianced woman, was very disturbing to her. However, she did not care. She did not understand how Simon Loggerheads had had the wit to perceive that she would be an ideal wife. And she did not care. She did not understand how, as a result of Simon Loggerheads, falling in love with her, she had fallen in love with him. And she did not care. She did not care a fig for anything. She *was* in love with him, and he with her, and she was idiotically joyous, and so was he.

On reflection, I have to admit that she did in fact care for one thing. That one thing was the look on her brother's face when he should learn that she, the faithful, sardonic sister, having uncomprehensively become indispensable and all-in-all to a bank cashier, meant to desert him. She was afraid of that look. She shook at the fore-vision of it.

Still Richard had to be informed, and the world had to be informed, for the silken dalliance between Mary and Simon had been conducted with a discretion and a secrecy more than characteristic of their age and dispositions. It had been arranged between the lovers that Simon should call on that Friday evening, when he would be sure to catch Richard in his easy chair, and should, in the presence of Mary, bluntly communicate to Richard the blunt fact. Mary was always an advocate of the policy of getting things over and done with.

"What's he gone out for? Anything special?" asked Simon.

Simon was now in Richard's own easy chair, and Mary was in her customary seat. It irked them to be so far apart, but they had to face the responsibility of the servant coming in.

Mary explained the circumstances.

"The truth is," she finished, "that girl is just throwing herself at Dick's head. There's no doubt of it. I never saw such work!"

"Well," said Simon Loggerheads, "of course, you know, there's been a certain amount of talk about them. Some folks say that your brother—er—began—"

"And do you believe that?" demanded Mary.

"I don't know," said Simon. By which he meant, diplomatically, to convey that he had had a narrow escape of believing it, at any rate.

"Well," said Mary with conviction, "you can take it from me, that it isn't so. I know Dick. Eva Harracles may throw herself at his head till there's no breath

Simon Loggerheads put in. "Isn't that encouraging her, as it were?"

"Ah!" said Mary, with a smile. "I only suggested it to him because it came over me all of a sudden how nice it would be to have you here all alone! He can't be back much before twelve."

To such a remark there is but one re-



Loggerheads and Richard Morfe met in Trafalgar Road

left in her body, and it'll make no difference to Dick. Do *you* see Dick a married man? I don't. I only wish he *would* take it into his head to get married. It would make me much easier in my mind. But, all the same, I do think it's downright wicked that a girl should fling herself *at* him, right *at* him! Fancy her calling to-night! It's the sort of thing that oughtn't to be encouraged."

"But I understood you to say that you yourself had told him to see her home,"

sponse. A sofa is after all made for two people, and the chance of the servant calling on them was small.

"And so the clock stopped!" observed Simon Loggerheads.

"Yes," said Mary. "If it hadn't been for the sheer accident of that clock stopping, we wouldn't be sitting here on this sofa now, and Dick would be in that chair, and you would just be beginning to tell him that we are engaged."

She sighed.



"Poor Dick! What on earth will he do?"

"Strange how things happened!" Simon reflected in a low voice. "But I'm really surprised at that clock stopping like that. It's a clock that you ought to be able to depend on, that clock is."

He got up to inspect the clock. He knew all about the clock, because he had been chairman of the presentation committee which had gone to Manchester to buy it.

"Why," he murmured, after he had toyed a little with the pendulum. "It goes all right. It's tick is as right as rain."

"How odd!" responded Mary.

Simon Loggerheads set the clock by his own impeccable watch, and then sat down again.

And he drew something from his waistcoat-pocket and slid it onto Mary's finger.

Mary regarded her finger in silent ecstasy, and then breathed, "How lovely!" Not meaning her finger.

"Shall I stay till he comes back?" asked Simon.

"If I were you, I shouldn't do that," said Mary. "But you can safely stay till

11:30. Then I shall go to bed. He'll be tired and short when he gets back. I'll tell him myself to-morrow morning at breakfast. And you might come to-morrow afternoon, early, for tea."

Simon did stay till half-past eleven. He left precisely when the clock, now convalescent, struck the half hour.

At the door Mary said to him:

"I won't have any secrets from you, Simon. It was I who stopped that clock. I stopped it while they were bending down looking for music. I wanted to be as sure as I could be, sure of a good excuse for my suggesting to him that he ought to take her home. I just wanted to get him out of the house."

"But why?" asked Simon.

"I must leave that to you to guess," said Mary, with a hint of tartness, but smiling.

Loggerheads and Richard Morfe met in Trafalgar Road.

"Good-night, Morfe."

"'Night, Loggerheads!"

And each passed on, without having stopped.

And you can picture for yourself the breakfast of the brother and sister.

## The Carita Record

BY MARGUERITE MERINGTON

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

AS a matter of fact, in spite of his patrician strain and profile he was a man in no wise remarkable but to the two girls concerned—and they were neither fools nor uncritical. He was the only one that mattered, that ever could matter in just that way—the only one!

Looking up from his letter where it lay unopened on her dressing table, Florence Bardwell encountered in the mirror the keen eyes of the maid who was arranging her hair. "That will do, Kirsch," she said. "I will finish for myself later on."

This annoyed Kirsch, who had been

counting on the joy of retailing, at the servants' table, Wolcott Wotton's proposal to Miss Bardwell, with witty comments of her own. Therefore she answered: "Very well, Miss," while adding an extra hairpin and thrusting in the comb, but lingered as long as possible, shifting and rearranging silver and glass toilet implements and matching belt and tie to the linen dress that hung over a chair. Florence, meanwhile, though inwardly wishing for a despot's knout, stretched herself with a luxurious yawn on the lounge beside a sunny window, and bent a thoughtful brow



"Do you mind telling me what there was between you and him?"

over the morning paper. And this, as Kirsch well knew, she would continue to do for some minutes after finding herself alone, as if to make her acting seem real to herself at least. Mistress and maid understood each other perfectly.

Florence could have foretold almost word for word the contents of his letter: He would be more than pleased to accept her mother's kind invitation to spend the approaching week-end at The Acacias, when he would take the opportunity to ask Florence a certain question. And in the meantime he was as ever her devoted—

Kirsch decided it was useless to remain longer, and went reluctantly down stairs.

"And you think she does be designing to take him, then, Miss Kirsch?" inquired Delia, the waitress who had received the morning mail at the door.

"Take him! She'll jump at him," predicted Kirsch.

Florence headed her black thoroughbreds down the long road that wound

between pleasant farming lands and dipped into the valley of the Hudson at Cuylerskill. Finally she drew up before the principal hotel. The bowing proprietor was effusively glad to see the beautiful Miss Bardwell. He need not ask if she were well. Her mother and brother, he trusted, were—Yes, his wife was ailing as usual, thank you, and yes, her friend Miss Lloyd was getting along very well; really remarkably well, considering. Yes, the slight unhandiness, if he might so express it, that Miss Lloyd had shown in her initial attempts as a waitress had quite—yes, indeed; Miss Lloyd fortunately was disengaged, at this very minute, and in her room. Should he send? Ah, well, if Miss Bardwell preferred. She knew the way?

Florence, seated on the only chair in a small room under the slanting roof, looked at Carita, sitting on the bed she shared with another of the hotel's maids.

"I wont ask you how you like it!"

Carita shook her fair head. "Ah, I no longer reckon likes and dislikes!"

"But at least," the other girl suggested, "you can love and hate."

A soft pink suffused Carita's cheeks, but she answered without visible emotion: "Routine benumbs the feelings, even if one had the opportunity."

"Surely it needn't have been this," persisted Florence. "Surely there are many other things a girl of your upbringing and position might have found to do?"

"As for instance?"

"Oh, I don't know! Teaching; type-writing, social secretary to some rich woman."

"In the first place I have had no training for any of these things. And then I don't want to run the risk of being brought into contact with any of the people I used to know."

"Carita, don't be angry with me, but won't you, won't you please let me help you? I have so much—"

"No, no! Thank you just the same. You see, Florence, by nature we are the easygoing kind, mumsey and I. If we once began to let ourselves be helped there would be no end. We should just drift, till without realizing it we should become hopeless pensioners, permanent parasites."

"Well, and suppose you were, it would be such a pleasure to me—And yet I quite understand how you feel about it. But you can't continue this indefinitely—"

"I do not intend to—in just this way. In a few weeks you'll see my name, Oh, in the smallest of type, on billboards: Carita in Plantation Songs—in Vaudeville."

"Vaudeville—Oh! And will you like that, do you think?"

"Like?—dislike? I told you, I can't afford to choose. You see, Florence, there are some personal debts—shoes, gloves, stationery. Mumsey and I never thought ourselves extravagant. We always thought we only ordered what we needed, but now—Well, the bills have to be paid; that's all!"

"But you can't go on that way forever."

"Forever! No, in the course of time I shall be too old."

"Carita!"

"Please, please! Don't worry about

me, Florence. Things are as they are."

Florence rose abruptly. "Let's get out into the open. It's so stuffy in here. I mean, let me take you for a drive."

Refusing on the plea of needing to be within call, Carita led the way to a wide balcony that overhung the street. "This is where I take my outings, watching the river boats and the people."

But Miss Bardwell had eyes neither for the people below, nor for the splendid stretch of river beyond blazing in the sun. As soon as they were seated she came straight to the point which up to now she had been evading. "Carita, I came to tell you I have had a letter. Wolcott Wotton is by way of offering himself to me."

After the slightest of pauses, "That is not surprising," replied the other girl. "The only wonder is that he has not done so sooner. I know you will believe me sincere in wishing you every happiness."

Florence laughed rather grimly, as she bent her cheek to receive the proffered touch of Carita's lips. "You take it for granted that I shall not refuse him."

"Oh!" Carita drew back. "I assumed from your mentioning it—"

"Yes, naturally. But—Carita, do you mind speaking frankly—telling me what there was between you and him?"

This time the pause was more perceptible as Carita sat with folded hands before replying: "About two years ago it was, he asked me to marry him."

"Oh! And you—But I thought—"

"You, too, have taken the answer for granted! So if I vexed you just now, we are quits. Well, to be truthful, I should have answered differently, only—You see he never spoke till after the crash. The day it all came out he came at once—and then he wrote—repeatedly."

"Oh, but that was splendid of him!" Florence was radiant with pride in her lover's magnanimity. Where the other girl flushed the soft pink of a sweet-pea, her own face glowed with a peony's rich crimson stain. "Don't misunderstand me, dear. You are worthy of the best. But men are worldly, these days; and Wolcott cares as much as the rest for position, money, and—"



"I go to church regularly—in the country"



"I know. Oh, I do full justice to his high-mindedness. But—"

"But wasn't it rather *uberspannt*, quixotic—there is no other English word—in you, to send him away?"

"Oh, it isn't quite the way you think. If he had spoken before—if we had already been engaged, the family misfortune would have made no difference, so far as I was concerned, but Florence, do you not see that if it had been your father who had gone under in that humiliating way, it is to you that Wolcott would have come?"

There was a long pause before Florence answered, in a low voice: "Yes, that is true." Rising, she added:—

"Well, things are as they are—to give you back your own words. Thank you for telling me, and forgive my asking. All this need not prevent our still being friends? And if at any time you change your mind about letting me help you—"

"Please, please! I am not ungrateful, but I shall not change my mind."

"Can't you give me an afternoon soon? You do have afternoons to yourself now and then, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. Once a fortnight. Susan's Sunday out!"

"Fine! I'll come and drive you out. Everything is in blossom—and we'll have music to our heart's content. Grand Opera—Canned Opera, my brother calls it! I have all the latest records."

"That will be a rare treat. But, don't you always have people staying over Sunday?"

"Oh, only old friends, who would be delighted—"

"Ah, but I cannot meet any of them—yet. Not till those gloves and shoes are off my mind."

"Well, then; some day when mother and I find ourselves alone. Good-by."

"Good-by, Florence. I appreciate your coming."

"You got my letter?" asked Wolcott as Florence met him at the terminus of the trolley line that connected Cuyler-skill with the little group of houses on the shores of Lake Uncas.

Florence laughed demurely. "Am I not here waiting for you?"

The few steps down the highroad to The Acacias gave no chance for intimate talk, and as the evening was cool, the group gathered, after dinner, about a crackling log fire, while Brian Bardwell, who was home on one of his rare visits, related some of his experiences as Consul-at-large to apparently half the universe. Once Wolcott seemed to see his approaching opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* when Brian rose, and strolling about the room, pointed to an instrument with a huge trumpet-shaped cone on the piano. "How about the canned music, Sis?"

"Fine!" answered Florence with enthusiasm. "That is the best birthday present you ever gave me, Brian! It's such fun, playing a singer's accompaniment without his knowing it! Don't you want to hear me?"

"No." Mrs. Bardwell, who saw all too little of her only son, drew him down beside her on the sofa. "Let Brian go on talking."

"By all means," assented Wolcott, and settled himself back again in the chair from which he had risen expectantly. "Let Brian go on talking."

"Don't disturb yourself," laughed Florence, as next morning she found Wolcott in a hammock on the veranda, submerged in Sunday papers.

Noting the prayerbook and hymnal she carried, "Is that a challenge, or an order?" he inquired.

"As you please to construe it. For my own part, I go to church regularly, in the country."

"As an example, I suppose, to the villagers, half of whom are too good to need it, and the remainder too bad to follow it."

"Not at all. I help with the singing. If I set any example, it is in the matter of millinery. There isn't a simple village maiden in these parts who would have the courage to appear in a last year's hat."

"I refuse to compliment your courage, since you know as well as I do how becoming the preposterous thing is!"

Wolcott picked up his own hat as he





They passed in silence across the daisied fields

swung out of the hammock. "Well, let us be starting. I suppose that little cluck in its throat means that the sanctuary bell is about to stop?"

A gay motor party drifted in for the Sunday midday meal, which they insisted on calling luncheon, through Mrs. Bardwell assured them it was an old-fashioned country dinner. Still another laughing group arrived in time for the evening meal—which they maintained must be high-tea, though Mrs. Bardwell called it supper, so that night had fallen before the transients drove away, with much honking and buzzing and gay leave-takings, and left Wolcott to feel that the hour and the girl were alike his at last. Getting Florence's red cloak from the hall-rack, he wrapped it about her shoulders with a proprietary air. "Come for a walk," he said. They passed in silence across the daisied fields under a tender moon, the man too content with the occasion's perfectness to be precipitate. After a while he asked: "Isn't there some place where we could sit down?"

"Yes, this way!" Florence turned to a path that followed a line of Carolina poplars. "Across the bridge."

Just then a chime of silvery bells, so faint as to seem fairy-like, came elusively through the sweet-scented night. Wotton laid a detaining hand on his companion's arm. "What is that?"

Florence turned and looked at him. "Do you like it?"

"Like it?" Wotton laughed, the word seemed so inadequate, as the haunting sound rang out, now with a persistent clamor, like a call to some magic realm of bliss. "Do I like the night—and you? But—"

Florence laughed, as in a vine-covered embrasure of the bridge they found a rustic seat. "I am sorry to dispel your illusions, but that is simply 'canned music,' as Brian calls it. It sounds so pretty in the open, at a little distance, that I sent the machine to the log cabin, with a maid to put in the records."

"Oh, very well," laughed Wolcott, half impatient, half amused, as he surrendered himself to the moment's spell.

The suggestion of anything mechanical in the music was lost in the tinkle of the brook, in the soft murmur of the breeze, the whisper of the leaves. There was no circumstance to mar the beautiful, disembodied voices that sang the exquisiteness of love. Screened by the vines from the eyes of the attendant in the cabin, they were man and woman in the solitude of Paradise.

Finding Florence's hand under the folds of the red cloak he lifted it to his lips, then with a sudden impulse put his arm about her and drew her toward him as if their understanding were complete. With a sigh, as of satisfaction, Florence at first yielded, then drew herself away.

The character of the minstrelsy changed. A sweet, girlish voice, fresh as spring, but with the plaintive note of an oboe, was piping an old song,

My arms stretch out to you across the years!

Wotton turned, frowning, to Florence. She answered his unspoken question: "That song is an old friend. Carita Lloyd used to sing it, poor girl! It sounds quaint after Sembrich, Melba, but—"

"But, I do not understand," interrupted Wotton. "Surely Miss Lloyd never sang professionally?"

"Oh, of course. You have been away so long," Florence enlightened him, "you do not know about her going into vaudeville!"

"Vaudeville! Carita Lloyd?"

"That at any rate, was better than slaving her life away as waitress in a country hotel!"

"What is that you are saying?" Wolcott gripped her arm. "After her father's suicide, there was plenty left for her mother and herself. I made most particular inquiries. Plenty!"

"Ah, that was Carita's pride that let you think so. As a matter of fact, they were destitute; in debt."

"Destitute!"

Leaping up, Wolcott paced to and fro, with hands thrust in his pockets, and eyes cast down, while Florence watched him with her heart in her throat. At last she

said, in a matter-of-fact tone that would have deceived everybody but Kirsch: "Yes, poor little Carita! She was a real heroine."

"Was!" Wotton stopped in front of her. "Why do you speak of her in the past tense?"

"What, don't you know? Haven't you heard? Did no one ever tell you of her illness, and—" She broke off, and in the rather imperious manner she sometimes employed toward servants, raised her voice. "Please give us that record again—the Carita record."

"No, no, no!" protested Wolcott, brokenly, but as his plea was unheeded or unheard, he moved away and stood leaning on the railing of the bridge looking far into the night.

"My arms stretch out to you across the years." He felt a touch on his shoulder, and, turning, faced Florence Bardwell.

"Would it make any difference to you?" she asked. "I mean in what you came here to tell me, if you knew that she were alive and cared?"

With the tears glistening in his eyes, Wolcott took her arms in his strong grasp, and looked into her unflinching eyes.

"You are too noble a woman not to have the whole truth. I loved her—I did not realize how much till she sent me away. I always shall love her memory, the thought of her. But that does you no wrong. There is still another kind of love, and that—"

"No, no! Oh, hush!" Florence wrenched herself away.

"Carita!" she called. Then, as the melody abruptly ceased, she added, with an odd laugh, "There is something the matter with the record. Go, see!" And pushed Wolcott toward the cabin.

Half dazed, Wolcott moved forward, at first slowly, then, as fast as steps could carry him when a white, girlish figure stepped into sight.

"Carita, dear, dear Carita!"

At a little answering cry from Carita, Wolcott opened his arms.

And then, drawing in a long breath between her teeth, Florence turned away and went back to the house alone.



"Come, Junior, you really must get dressed"

—B. CORY KILVERT—

## The Development of Junior

BY OCTAVIA ROBERTS

ILLUSTRATED BY B. CORY KILVERT

THE Winchester Hotel was far enough from the heart of the city to boast a respectable plat of ground and a small artificial pond. In the summer months this stretch of lawn was emerald green, spotted with geometrical stars of geraniums; the pond was blue and limpid, and little boys and girls sailed their boats upon its surface. But now that summer had fled, an icy wind blew over grass that was brown and dead, gathering a layer of snow from the pond, where a few skaters struggled, to whirl it onto long stretches of deserted piazza.

But within the Winchester there was the light and warmth of summer. Double doors and windows defied the shrieking wind, steam bumped comfortably in gilded pipes. The perpetual glow of electricity augmented the wan light of the wintry sun. Velvet carpets, thick and red,

covered long lanes of corridor and tiers of numbered rooms. In the tiled bathrooms adjoining each suite, boiling water gushed into porcelain tubs at a turn of the hand.

Upon a Turkish bath-mat, before one of the largest and glossiest of these, a small boy stood passively and allowed a competent-looking young woman in the striped dress of a nurse to briskly rub dry his thin shoulders, hollow chest and spindling little legs. From time to time he ejaculated "ouch," with a kind of inert petulance, as the nurse inadvertently rubbed an ear the wrong way or waved the fringe of the towel in his watery blue eyes. When his body was at length dry, and the flesh as rosy as it ever grew, Miss Thompson began coaxing him with a somewhat weary persistence into his clothes, which she held forth in-

vitingly, article by article. "Come, Junior, that's a good boy," she reiterated. But Junior, with a kind of limp interest, bent forward into the tub, from whence the soapy water retreated, and sailed the washcloth down the tide.

"Come, Junior, you really must get dressed. Don't you want to breakfast with your father? We are going for a lovely walk directly afterwards, too."

"Where are we going?" said Junior, his little naked body still bending far into the tub.

"Oh, out into the park. We'll take the opera glass and maybe see a junko or a chipping sparrow. Come, Junior, your father is waiting for you now."

The water at this moment, with a last throaty gurgle, disappeared, whereupon Miss Thompson seized Junior with a firm hand and dragged his little knitted shirt over his head so suddenly and firmly that his ears and nose were unpleasantly flattened to his head.

"O-u-c-h, you hurt me!" bawled Junior. From his open mouth one dismal roar succeeded another during the remainder of the toilet. At no time did he offer to assist Miss Thompson. She buttoned his clothes to his little waistband, pulled on his stockings over legs that refused to obligingly stiffen during the operation, brushed his scanty hair, and tied at last, with sharp, decisive tweaks, a large windsor tie under his hanging jaw.

Beyond the bathroom in the larger bedroom, Junior's mother lay back on her pillow, sipping her coffee. Before the dresser Junior's father tied his cravat with fingers that nervously wavered each time that a wail rose from the bathroom.

"Jenny," he said at last, as if the matter were wholly her concern, "what are you going to do with that boy? He's coddled to death. Can't he dress himself yet? He's seven years old, isn't it? Why,

when I was seven, I got up at four, made the fire, drove the cows to the pasture—"

His wife laughed merrily. "Now, Sprague, dear, not *seven*; when I first heard that story you were older; each time you take off a year."

"I dressed myself, at least," he retorted, "and I didn't howl, either."

"You didn't have so many garments as dear little Junior," she defended the boy.

"He, too, could draw on a flannel shirt, a pair of galluses and some old trousers, and dress himself, if that was all there was to do." At the image of Junior these words conjured, she laughed again, and put up her pretty mouth to her husband's farewell kiss.

Yet his frown still lingered, even as he smoothed her bright hair. "Earnestly, though, Jenny, the boy isn't what he should be. Why do we keep Miss Thompson? He isn't ill?"

"I couldn't trust him with an ignorant woman," she explained, with the quick reproach that seemed to doubt his love—and so silenced him. "We're out so much, dear. You wouldn't leave him alone in the hotel. Suppose it caught fire! Miss Thompson is teaching him

his lessons, too, and she sees that he gets daily exercise."

"Why doesn't he play with the boys?"

"They're so rough. Percy Allison knocked Junior down on the ice the other day and he caught a severe cold. You know he's not very strong. That's another reason for having Miss Thompson."

"Why doesn't he go to school?"

"The nearest school to which I'd consider having him go is so far away. He is learning very nicely with Miss Thompson. The doctor doesn't advise school, anyway, until he has his strength."

"How does he expect him to get it? I've paid out money enough to have produced a prize fighter."



Junior



"He says that he ought to be developed. I've been thinking about it seriously, Sprague, and I've about concluded to go to Mrs. Comyngs-Carr's studio and get her to send out one of her teachers to give Junior æsthetic gymnastic exercises. I believe it would be the making of him."

At this moment Junior, brave in his sailor suit and windsor tie, issued from the bathroom and seized his father joyously about the legs. Then he ran to his mother's arms and on her shoulder laid a head, a little large and heavy for his spindling body, and gazed admiringly into her beautiful, loving face.

"Why did you cry so, dear? You mustn't cry now, you are too large a boy."

Junior grinned foolishly and buried his head in the pillow. Suddenly he seized his mother's coffee cup. "I'm going to have my breakfast with you," he teased. "I don't feel well. I have a headache." He began nibbling at little crusts of toast, rolling his eyes about to detect parental admiration. In an excess of fondness his mother kissed his thin little cheeks. "Oh, Junior, Junior, Junior," she murmured, her fair long hands on either side his bumpy temples. But his father said peremptorily, "Come, son," and together they went down.

Before the grating that protected the two swift elevators Junior turned an eager face. "Don't push that button, father, please, I want to ride down with Peter." His words came too late. With a springing bounce the other elevator came to a stop, a thin, morose negro held open the door of the cage, from whence two ladies in perfect morning attire stared out at Junior and Mr. Kory.

"Oh, father, I want to ride with Peter. Please wait for Peter."

With a firm push Mr. Kory shoved his son into the elevator. "Behave yourself, get right in. Who is Peter?"

The little boy buried his head in his arm; he wailed openly. "Peter runs the other elevator. He lets me pull the rope. I think you're mean." He gave a vicious little kick, inadvertently touching the lady nearest to him, who angrily removed her train. "The worst child in the hotel," she said, audibly.

Once on the lower floor Mr. Kory jerked Junior out of the elevator onto the tiled floor of the great office. At the same moment the other elevator came to a stop. Junior ran to the door from whose portal a second colored boy peered lazily out. He had a round black face, a row of dazzling white teeth, and a loose, good-natured laugh.

"Well, boss," he said to Junior, showing his teeth in a pleasant smile. "You done gone back on Peter? Ridin' with Charley this mornin'?"

Junior looked back lingeringly over one shoulder. "I'll ride *up* with you, Peter," he shouted, loyally, as he disappeared into the great glare and blare of the dining-room.

During breakfast Mr. Kory ate absently, his eyes traveling meanwhile down the first sheet of the morning paper. Before the conclusion of their cereal, Miss Thompson joined them. She tied a napkin about Junior's throat and countermanded the order for his breakfast, substituting simpler food. Junior, confronted with eggs and milk, raised a protesting snivel which was silenced by a glance of impatience from his father, devouring coveted griddle cakes and syrup. The little boy left the eggs untasted, drank one or two convulsive gulps of milk; then lapsed into inertia.

At the conclusion of the meal, which Mr. Kory finished with his watch on the table, he bent and kissed his son before hastening into the heart of the city. It was for Junior, he firmly believed, that he worked incessantly, piling up dollar upon dollar for his future years. Of Junior as a struggling little boy he gave little thought. In his mind's eye he saw him already as a junior partner, in his turn collecting dollars upon dollars for other little lads yet to be.

While Mr. Kory dreamed of these years on the express train that bore him to his busy office, Junior, attended by the ever-present Miss Thompson, had attained his daily goal of desires: he was helping run the elevator for Peter. With feeble hands he started the slippery rope, turning his laughing face upward for Peter's approval. At the terminus Peter in his good nature invited him to





— BARRY HILBERT —

He grabbed Junior and whirled him in derision

make an extra trip or two, but Miss Thompson took him by the shoulder and led him resolutely towards the overheated, handsome suite of rooms that comprised Junior's home. On their way down the corridor a door suddenly burst open and a red-haired boy came whooping savagely towards Junior, brandishing his fists towards his short nose in an alarming manner. Junior's retort was a weak "Now, Percy, you stop," walking rapidly meanwhile toward his own door. Once he struck out aimlessly at the red-haired boy, but this demonstration of independence only increased Percy's hostility. He grabbed Junior by his sailor blouse and whirled him about in derision. Only Miss Thompson's intervention saved Junior the ignominy of begging for mercy. Once in his own living room, he flung himself on the divan and sniveled weakly in the sofa cushions. From her bedroom his mother, beautiful in furs and turban, hastened toward him.

"Come, my darling boy, let Miss Thompson put on your things. We won't let Percy hurt you, sweetheart."

"I don't want to go to walk," said Junior.

"You're going with me, mother's dar-

ling, I'm going to take you to a lady who will make you strong and well."

"As strong as Peter?" said Junior, his face lighted to a faint interest.

His mother laughed gaily. "Is Peter so strong, dear? As strong as Peter, then; but you must do just as the lady tells you, you know."

"Is she as strong as Peter?" persisted Junior. "I bet Peter can lick her," and he began an imaginary combat, brandishing his arms in imitation of Peter, the foe supposedly the new teacher.

Miss Thompson now emerged from the inner rooms with Junior's wraps, and so put an end to the play. With impatient fingers she buttoned Junior into long leggings, swathed his neck in a fancy scarf, drew on fur-lined gloves, pulled him into a long, heavy overcoat and clapped a fancy sailor's cap, with "U. S. Navy" inscribed thereon in gilt letters, over Junior's heavy, watery eyes. So labeled, Junior invited the derision of the hotel.

The road to Mrs. Comyns-Carr's studio seemed to Junior to be beset with pitfalls to progress. His mother, his thick glove in hers, tripped into department stores, shoe stores, and milliners'. In

these places, Junior, swathed in his hot clothes, watched her shop with lack-luster eyes from the high stools where he awkwardly clambered. Just as he believed the shopping ended, they paused at the manicurist's for a long hour. When they at last reached the studio, in another great, over-heated building, it was high noon, and Mrs. Carr was just closing the door on her way to lunch. She turned a pretty, listening face to Mrs. Kory, whom she apparently knew well, and stroked Junior's shoulder kindly from time to time. Plainly, however, she was very tired and anxious to get to her luncheon. At last she said, crisply:

"You think that he's not strong enough for the regular gymnasium? I see. Suppose then I send you out one of our pupil-teachers every afternoon, to give him such exercises as he can stand. Rhythmical breathing and æsthetic gymnastics ought to do wonders for the little man. Good-by, then, for to-day, Mrs. Kory. Aren't you coming down to hear my course of lectures this winter, on 'The Road to Health, Grace and Dramatic Expression?' Do, wont you?"

The following afternoon the supposed embodiment of Mrs. Carr's teachings appeared at the Kory's suite, in the person of a small pupil-teacher with eyes large and frightened behind her veil. Remembering that the lesson must last an hour, she consumed as much time as possible in the removal of her wraps, folding and refolding her veil, smoothing her coat and pulling out one by one the fingers of her gloves; but when not even an unruly rubber offered a further excuse, she turned and faced Junior, curiously staring, and Miss Thompson, neat in her insignia of occupation, the nurse's stripes and cap. What little anatomy Miss Keep had ever known floated from her memory as her foreboding became a certainty that Miss Thompson would witness the lesson.

"Now Junior," she began faintly, "I want you to expand your chest, so—one, two, three, inhale. Exhale, one, two, three. Let it be perfectly rhythmical."

Junior, with an effort at imitation, puffed his cheeks to bursting, and as suddenly allowed them to collapse.

"No, no," said the little teacher severely, and repeated her instructions. They were without avail. Sometimes Junior drew quick sniffs of the hot air of the hotel into his lungs, sometimes long breaths, but always he exhaled them with a suddenness that was discouraging. "Miss Keep, are you going to live with us always?" he would interrupt, or, "Does Miss Thompson have to stay if you do?"

At the end of fifteen minutes Miss



It was—

Keep decided to leave the breathing and start on physical exercises. Over and over she explained to the inattentive Junior the advantages of a certain unfolding of the arms, known as the feather movement, illustrating horizontally, as she spoke. It was in vain. The feather movement no more caught the fluttering attention of Junior than had the rhythmical breathing. He flung his arms violently apart for a few brief moments,

then with attention that grew slack, moved them limply to and fro. Once or twice he sighed heavily, his head strained to one side in order to catch a glimpse of the skating pond far below, where Percy Allison flew in eddying spirals. He continued to throw his arms aimlessly about, though he no longer heard what Miss Keep was saying.

"No, no, Junior," she interrupted sharply at last, "you aren't making progress. Be a good boy now and we will start you in a little drill." Thereupon poor, solitary Junior was put through a combination of the breathing and the feather movement, with a quick, sliding motion of the leg. He moved his arms listlessly upward, downward, far apart; shook his hands above his head, touched the floor with stiff knees — Junior's would bend — marched about the room in what Miss Keep tried to make him believe was a military manner, and at length dropped back among the pillows of the divan, a little heavier-eyed than when the lesson had started.

"Now," said Miss Keep as she prepared to depart, "I'll measure your chest expansion, Junior, your shoulders, and so forth. At the end of the month we must see an improvement."

At the end of three weeks there was none. Every time that Miss Keep walked down the long corridor that led to Junior's rooms, her step was heavier. Junior was her first pupil, and it was humiliating to confess to failure. Every afternoon Junior's attention grew more flagging. If it had not been for Miss Thompson's grim watch he would have openly refused to "feather," to "inhale," "exhale," and all the rest of the movements. Even a little gold wand and a pair of dumbbells, that Miss Keep introduced in des-

peration, failed to arouse a spark of interest in languid Junior.

Occasionally Mrs. Kory stopped the pupil-teacher in the halls or great office, to inquire about Junior's progress. "Of course I know, Miss Keep, you've had him such a short time," she would murmur with a growing despair. "Only just what am I going to do with Junior if he doesn't *start* to develop?"

"Our method takes time," little Miss Keep would defend herself desperately. "Have patience, Mrs. Kory, I'm—I'm just laying the foundations now."

The month drew to a close. One day in January, for the first time in a week, Miss Keep again encountered Mrs. Kory. She was just stepping into her electric brougham and leaned from the door to call the pupil-teacher.

"Miss Keep, I'm glad to have caught you; I want to tell you that I've sent Miss Thompson away. I came out unexpectedly last night, to find that she had gone out and left little Junior all alone. Imagine my feelings! I sent her away this morning. I'm going now to see if I can't find an old Scotch nurse I've heard of. Who's with Junior now? Peter, the elevator boy. He's going to take care of him until I can find just the right person. Junior offered to bathe and dress himself if I would try Peter. It's ridiculous, isn't it?"

Junior stayed in the elevator this morning. Then Peter arranged to be with him until you came, and he'll come round again afterwards, until bedtime. Just step to the end of the piazza, you'll find them there waiting for you. I told Peter to bundle him up well and take him for a walk on the sunny side of the house."

To Miss Keep's survey, a moment after, no Junior nor Peter revealed themselves. With anxious eyes she searched



—B. KORY KILBERT—  
—in vain

the great length of empty piazza. Suddenly from the pond below a shrill voice cried, "Hello there, Miss Keep. Look at me, Miss Keep, I'm learning to skate." And there, tottering uncertainly about on the ice, supported by Peter, was Junior. His cheeks were flushed, his eyes bright. In his triumph he took several plunging glides from side to side. High on the bank lay his overcoat, neatly folded.

That day the lesson passed quickly, perhaps because Junior started a quarter of an hour late, perhaps because his mind

leaped eagerly to its finish, when Peter had promised to teach him the card game of "Pitch." At the conclusion he ran ahead of Miss Keep with a new gallantry, a strange eagerness, and rang the bell of Peter's elevator, then entering, pulled the rope that sent it downward, with the air of a proprietor. As it started he looked up for Peter's approval, his smile showing the pink gums that were beginning to drop their white milk-teeth.

"I dressed myself this morning, Peter," he confided. "Could you dress yourself when you was as old as me?"

"I can't remember when I couldn't," said Peter. "My little brother, Venetious, is about yo' age, an' he wouldn't no mo' let a woman dress him than nothin'. Why he's smoked his first seegar a'-ready." He looked Junior over with an affectionate scrutiny. "Did you meet dat Percy Allison in de hall?" he asked, confidentially.

"No," said Junior, his upturned face shining with his trust in Peter. "You wouldn't let him hurt me, would you, Peter?"



"Look at me; I'm learning to skate"

Peter frowned judicially. "It's like dis: I could beat him off'n you of co'se; you know dat, but what's de use? Back he'd come, like he's always done. I'm fixin' to teach you to beat him off, yo'self. I'm gwyin' learn you the cut I done Charley up with las' wintah. Once you gets it—it's the end of him."

Junior bounced joyously from one foot to the other; his "g'by, Miss Keep," was strangely abstracted.

After this lesson Miss Keep went home with an unwonted feeling of elation, for Junior had never been so

alert. Perhaps success would yet crown her efforts. With renewed zeal she sat up late, adapting some exercises for Junior that she had heretofore deemed too difficult for his feeble powers; and to her joy, his improvement was coincident with their introduction.

In the days that followed, when Junior's permanent improvement was becoming a certainty, little Miss Keep had her sense of triumph in that the censorious Miss Thompson could claim no share in it. Junior, save for the services of Peter, was now entirely in her hands. And with Peter, ignorant and irresponsible, she feared no rivalry.

This irresponsibility of Peter's was all now that troubled Miss Keep. The colored boy had no more sense of time than Junior, and scold as Miss Keep would, the little boy was never ready for his lesson. In Miss Thompson's days he had always awaited her in a clean blouse, seated quietly on the divan. Now, however, Miss Keep was obliged each day to put her dignity in her pocket and hunt her pupil throughout the grounds. Some-

times she found Peter, boyishly glad of his freedom from hotel service, dragging Junior on a sled at a dangerous rate of speed, sometimes Junior gallantly, though painfully, pulling Peter. On one occasion she discovered them in a fort of snow from whence Junior rained snowballs at all marauders. He was positively boisterous at his lesson that day, turning handsprings among the furniture in his excess of spirits.

Moreover, he had learned to skate. At first it had been mostly on his ankle bones, but as the days went by, and, under Peter's instruction, the tender muscles hardened and confidence came, the pupil teacher felicitated herself again and again on the great improvement that was perceptible in her charge. Junior's color became rich, the ashiness was gone, the eyes were bright. As for Peter, he served in his new capacity to the best of his knowledge and was silently content.

At the end of February, however, the pupil-teacher accepted a more permanent engagement, in promising to marry an admiring young man who was apologetic for being the means of ending her career. She broke the news to Mrs. Kory before the last lesson, just as that lady

again entered her brougham. Mrs. Kory was startled, but upon second thoughts more reconciled.

"For," said she earnestly, "my dear young lady, yours has been the best teaching of all. Junior's health is now so firmly established that he can go forward by himself. Since he's been strong enough to play, he's entered into rivalry with other boys, which makes him insistent upon starting to school at once. Of course Junior was always manly, but he's growing even more so. He refuses a nurse, so that there is really very little to do for him any more. I hope that you'll be very happy, Miss Keep, but I can't help thinking what a teacher the world has lost. I shall always remember that it was under you that Junior started to develop."

After such praise it was with a feeling of keen gratification that little Miss Keep bade her patron farewell, and then looked smilingly about for Junior. But already Junior had flown below, where, with Peter's aid, he and a long string of other boys were indulging in the dangerous pastime of "crack the whip," on the shining surface of the little pond.



Junior gallantly, though painfully pulling Peter





Helen

## The Great Too Much

BY EDWARD STRATTON HOLLOWAY

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICK

(See Cover and Frontispiece)

I PRESUME that it is precisely because I am so fiendishly a man of action that I am such an idiot upon the subject of a quiet home. Perhaps, also, just as sometimes we look longingly at the stars, thinking they might possibly provide a haven from this whirling globe of ours, I have ached for it as scarcely less impossible a place of refreshment and retreat. Definitely I had never had it; only too probably now I never should have it.

My engineering life had taken me far afield and into curiosities of "hotel" existence in remote districts, where the question of having my eggs fried or boiled seemed to be the morning problem of maids-of-all-work, who might be Irish, colored or Pennsylvania German—but always were slatternly. And then at last I reached those twin Meccas

of many Americans, New York and Success.

The metropolis I found hospitable to success—quite too infernally hospitable for the accomplishment of my desires. My ideal of existence is to throw one's self into the work he has chosen, without reserve of body or mind, and then, that the click of his office door, as it closes behind him at night, shall shut off all but peace, quiet and sane amusement. I found the great city quite at one with me upon the first half of my program, but the "click," to its mind, was a signal releasing madmen to a pandemonium of play. I myself had been caught by a score or two of the maddest and whirled into the midst of the throng.

And those I knew were not of the merely social set; they were people who had "done" things, who had attained.

Their amusements were in no way vicious, were largely intellectual—so causing all the greater strain. Their minds were never at rest; how could they be when they never were at home? Dining, *musicales*, "studios," the theatre and opera, societies and clubs, artistic or learned, and their affairs, suppers, the entertaining of "celebrities," exhibition first nights, problem-plays and costume dances, with the thought and labor they entailed—none of which could wait, all to be done—"at once." All good, these and many more, but all making up the drive, the wild stampede, The Great Too Much!

But in the throng I had found the woman. Perhaps we two might stem the stampede and break forth together.

You shall judge.

Helen Vibbert lived with her aunt at "The Fragonard," an apartment house newly built by those who "knew," and the latest cry in artistic fashion. Environment and aunt were at one; about the girl I was not sure. She fitted it, brilliantly, as she fitted all things with her wonderful adaptability; filled it and all things, and me, with her loveliness. But—the "but" stood like a post, rough and grim; she knew no such thing as Rest.

Almost from the first we discerned each other and fell in step. I was able to make little exclusive demand upon her crowded hours, but this was scarcely needed, for our entertainments brought us continually together. Often there would be only a moment's talk, but, subtly, our intercourse seemed to proceed from occasion to occasion, with no greater breaks than the elusiveness of clever conversation usually interposes. Her brilliance, her variety were amazing; they stimulated me like wine, and in some way my own force seemed to react upon her. I should have set down this last to imagination or wild conceit, had not her aunt, a very fiend in worldly wisdom, said, looking suspiciously at me: "How Helen has come out: she used to be so quiet."

I wished to the skies she were that now! She stimulated me till I, too, knew no rest, for I loved her to madness and her presence was always with me.

But I would not yield—I was too uncertain. Her closeness seemed only of the mind; she showed none of woman's tenderness—there seemed never to be *time*! It was always Rush, there was no repose. At the last it appeared as if she scarcely found leisure to eat or dress, for if I called I invariably had to wait.

The pace grew too hot for me, I could not keep it up. And then there came the call of business in the West. It would give me time, perspective, a chance to think. I seized it eagerly.

But it did not "pan." I made a lot of money—and that is always useful in expensive Manhattan—but I could not quiet down. Restlessness, wretchedness, were in my nerves; I had overdriven for months.

My "thinking," too, had settled no perplexity. I had written Helen once or twice and had heard from her. Our letters were further samples of the general piece—the pattern was unchanged.

And so, unrested and unresting, I came home. But I was resolved upon peace—if I had to fight for it, if I were obliged to slink about in disguise. In the course of the first day's work, however, I ran across most of those I knew. One seldom does in immense New York, so I could only conclude that Fate held me by the throat.

Tired out at night by accumulated work, I was just getting into an old and easy coat when the telephone rang. I took down the receiver—and left it down. Perhaps ten minutes later there was a knock. Unthinkingly I had not turned out the light; denial of my presence was useless. At the door I waged battle with Blackshaw, who wanted me to do—oh, a hundred things, all in that one night. At last he left, I feared more than a little hurt. I distinctly liked Dick Blackshaw, indeed, he was one of my closest friends, and if he were hurt, it was to my sincere regret. Unless I cared to make myself disagreeable to others, who might call later, there was but one refuge for me—the streets. I chose the quiet ones. I was more tired in mind and spirit than in body, and swung along easily through the cool air, unobserved and unobserving. This was better. It could not

last, I had no wish permanently to "hit the pike," but I could keep it up till my friends had distributed themselves for the evening, until the revel should have well begun.

And then, unknowing, I entered the haven of rest! I became aware of a quiet street east of the Avenue. It was not new to me, since it lay in the immediate vicinity of the Fragonard, but its possibilities had not before revealed themselves to my mood. The scattered electrics shone down upon me through the tracery of trees. Trees! They were not exuberant specimens, nor so frequent as I desired—but they added to the old-time effect.

And that was what I had found, a past not distant and not dingy, but free from the varnish of the new; hospitable-looking doorways, and glimpses of interiors ample and refined. In the middle of the block was a double house, a spacious mansion. As I reached it I stopped. There was quiet in its air, repose in its wide-spreading breadth. I looked up, half-expecting to read somewhere the legend—Peace.

"If I could but live here!" I said, half-audibly. And then against the white paneled vestibule I caught the gleam of polished brass—letter boxes and speaking tubes. "Apartments! I *can* live here, and will!"

But was there a vacancy? Do people move away from heaven? I will not tell you how quickly I mounted those steps to see. The proprietor himself lived on the premises; I routed him out. There was a vacancy! Some one had moved to the country.

The country! The country is to raise vegetables in!

I passed through long, cool halls, into a spacious chamber. From it opened a boudoir—all in white, besprinkled with snow-flakes in silver gray. There was a modern bathroom—the one thing modern I could endure.

"I'll take it—now—for a year. How much?"

I gave my name and references. At my insistence he 'phoned these guarantors of my solvency at once; the lease was signed; I paid my cash, I held the keys.

"I'll wait awhile"—I took out the

coiled steel tape I always carried—"and measure for rugs and furniture. What's this?"

I made for a door I had not observed.

But he stopped me. "That's another apartment, occupied by Mrs. Severn. I suppose I ought to have the door built up, but it's securely fastened."

"Oh, very well, I suppose they're quiet?"

"Perfectly." And with that he left me to myself.

I stood in the center of the chamber. Paper and paint were excellent; the lights reflected in the polished floor; through the long windows came the rustle of leaves in the evening breeze.

It was mine—and *not a soul should know*. I would keep my old rooms, be there when I chose, but this should be my home!

I believe I said I was a man of action. In the morning I telephoned my office that I would not appear. I reveled away the forenoon; old mahogany, rugs, Eighteenth Century colored prints, a luxurious four-poster and bedding. I did not care what I spent, I tipped extra for delivery, immediate and unfailing. I did not *fill* the rooms, bought only that which was needful. There would be pieces of Chippendale and Sheraton I should see, and covet, and there must be room for those. From henceforth I was going to live! I had broken fetters, cast away the prisoner's garb.

Before night all was complete. I dined and slunk back—with what infinite precaution, lest I should be observed! I had interviewed the proprietor, Potter by name, and finding him an understanding soul, under bond of secrecy let him into my secret. In the name-slip downstairs I deposited a written card, bearing the cognomen of Frederick Norton Brown. It was a very good name, I thought, and would do as well as any.

Ah! I threw myself into a big, deep, claw-foot chair. The lamp was at my side, one of Turgenev's novels in my hand; a quaint little Georgian bowl held cigarets. Just within the window grew a great bush of roses. There was peace. Not a friend or foe could find me. Possibly at this minute at my other apartments, the



Our entertainments brought us continually together

electric bell was ringing, the telephone jangling. Let it ring! Let it jangle! I couldn't hear. I thought of the Great White Way, its theatres and cafés; to me it was as far away as the Great Stone Wall of China! There was nothing—but this. I realized that I had not read a book for weeks. I sunk myself in happiness.

At length, through the closed and curtained doorway, came a sound. A piano! "The devil!" my nerves broke forth.

But it took up the melody of a Schubert song. A low, rich voice came to my ears, as one who sang not to others but to her own soul. I leaned back in my chair, soothed, entranced, content.

From the first I had no fear—that voice would sing not too long, would never sing what I did not love, and—no; there was the rub—it might not sing always when I needed it.

I slept like a child, I rose refreshed and did a man's work. At night I came home to peace. There was one ache, one want, which would abide—Helen. Well, I wanted a fixed star; she was a comet. I would not have the comet. And probably the comet would not care for me.

It was of course impossible that I should continually be absent from my known apartments, but at least for the present I would sink myself to the chin in the bath of repose, let the world go hang. Each day I found time to add some of the touches which transform "house" to "home;" each night I had my book, my quiet hours and Mrs. Severn's songs. Some day I should doubtless meet her, in the corridor or on the stair—might the day be long postponed! It would be a wondrous personality, indeed, which should sustain the beauty of her music. That the combination existed would be too much to look for; I dreaded disillusionment.

Wednesday I had hastened home a little early in the afternoon. I was expecting the arrival of a beautifully carved chair I had bought, and wanted to see it safely in its place—janitors are fiends! It was later than the hour its delivery had been promised, and I thought it might have been left down stairs.

Hatless I went out into the hall. At

the same instant the door of the next apartment opened and a woman, also hatless, stepped out.

We stood speechless, staring at each other.

It was Helen.

Of course she first found her aplomb.

"What are you doing—here?" she laughed, but a laugh can cover many things.

Well, I had a few of my own to reckon with.

At that instant my bell rang, and, excusing myself, I stepped back into my apartment and pushed the button that unlatched the door.

"Here comes the chair I was waiting for, most *apropos*. I can't ask you in, but—here you are. Sit right down. You command the enemy and I'm going to capitulate and beg for mercy."

I let it all out breezily, but I think there was a wistfulness behind the words. I doubt if she heard more than a few of them. "I command the enemy? The enemy!" she echoed.

"There, I've hurt you at the very start. There's no use in a man's trying to be diplomatic with a woman—she sees it all, or sees it wrong! It's better to be simply honest."

And then I told her what I have told you—save as regarded herself—of my harassed, driven life, of the strategy for peace. We were undisturbed and she sat and listened to the unvarnished tale. There was at first amazement.

"You!" she broke out. "The very embodiment of action, the most tireless man I ever knew. You!"

"Just me," I said. "Only don't betray me—this retreat."

"Let me see it," she demanded.

I opened the door. She gave a little start, a slight exclamation; but I could not read her down-turned face.

"Of course you can never understand," I said, "you, the most brilliant woman in all New York—"

"But I do!" Her lifted eyes were moist with tears. "I've given it all up—the brilliance; I could not keep it up."

"You?"

"Just me."

But now with joyous laughter she





We stood speechless, staring at each other

dashed away the tears. "Come here, come here!" She caught my hand and led me to her door. "*I can ask you in—Mrs. Severn, my companion—*" In her eagerness she thrust me in.

"Well, I'll be—"

"Yes," she caught my arm, "wont we, both of us, if we ever saw anything like it—in all our lives. It's the same thing. It's all one!"

It was.

Had that door, between, been open, it would have been one apartment—one in tone and spirit.

I turned toward her. "And this is yours?"

"*Isn't it—and isn't it dear! You must meet Mrs. Severn, and then sit down.*"

I met Mrs. Severn—wise Mrs. Severn, who, as soon as might be, took herself beyond sight and hearing.

Meanwhile I walked about, delighted and admiring. At the little glimmering grand I threw my arm over its polished top. "Ah, my mahogany friend, if you but knew what you and your lady have been to me!"

I spoke to it but looked at her.

"I'm glad," she said, simply.

Neither of us spoke. I came back from my wandering to a big chair and sat down. At its feet was a low stool. With a little bird-like flight she came to it, and sank down.

"Now I must confess—"

But I turned toward her, my hands upon her shoulders.

"Helen—"

She looked up searchingly.

"Dearest, I want you," I went on.

"You want me, now—when I have failed?" she asked.

"Failed? You—failed? You've failed no more than I. We've ceased to be madmen if that's what you mean. We've *won!* we two."

"But I couldn't keep it up."

"No more could I. Why in heaven's name should we?"

"The others do."

"Oh, they!" I jeered. "Whirling, howling dervishes of pleasure. Let them—till they drop. They do drop—or wish they could!"

"Why did you call me 'Commander of your enemies?'"

"That's what you were—most brilliant of them all—until you 'failed.' Now I change it: commander of my heart."

"And you wanted—this?"

"I always want the best, the highest, the hardest to secure. Dear heart, have you found anything so hard to get as 'this?'"

She laughed. "Never in all my life: I had to fight for it."

"So had I—and shall we let it go, this Blessed Now? I won't."

"You need not—if you are content."

"Content!" I stopped the words upon her lips.

When I let her go, flushed, radiant, she smoothed her hair. "Poor Mrs. Severn!"

"Blessed Mrs. Severn—for her absence! Wise, discriminating Mrs. Severn—incomparable pearl of chaperons!"

"Isn't she? Now let me tell you—"

"Tell me how you are here, and not with your aunt at The Fragonard."

"I am at The Fragonard. Where do you think the Fragonard is?"

"Upon my soul, directly back of us—on the next street."

She laughed with glee. "They adjoin—almost. Mr. Potter runs them both: there's a covered way between the houses."

I chuckled.

"What are you laughing at?"

"The last few times I called, you always kept me waiting—and I always swore."

And she laughed, too. How easily we laugh when once we are free of The Great Too Much, when once we reach The Blessed Now.

"We'll follow your lead," I said. "We'll take apartments at the Fragonard, for the world to find us—when it can." I caught her to me. "Helen, when?"

And then—"Can we lose this—for a single day? Never! Helen, gather up Mrs. Severn, your aunt, anyone you please. I'll get Dick Blackshaw on the 'phone, get the church, The Little Church Around the Corner—" We were on our feet. "Will you—now?"

Most brilliant of women, she was that now! "Yes!"

I turned, pointing to the closed way between the two apartments. "And while we're out, Potter takes down that door!"



"Dearest, I want you," I went on

# From Out The Blizzard

Steele of The Royal Mounted Meets A Girl

BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

Author of "The Man Hunter," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GAYLE HOSKINS

HIS pen drove steadily over the paper, as if the mere writing of a letter he might never mail, in some way lessened the loneliness.

The wind is blowing a furious gale outside. From off the lake come volleys of sleet, like shot from guns, and all the wild demons of this black night in the wilderness seem bent on tearing apart the huge end-locked logs that form my cabin home. In truth, it is a terrible night to be afar from human companionship, with naught but this roaring desolation about and the air above filled with screeching terrors. Even through thick log walls I can hear the surf roaring among the rocks and beating the white driftwood like a thousand battering-rams, almost at my door. It is a night to make one shiver, and in the lulls of the storm the tall pines above me whistle and wail mournfully as they straighten their twisted heads after the blasts.

To-morrow this will be a desolation of snow. There will be snow from here to Hudson's Bay, from the Bay to the Arctic, and where now there is all this fury and strife of wind and sleet there will be unending quiet—the stillness which breeds our tongueless people of the North. But this is small comfort for to-night. Yesterday I caught a little mouse in my flour and killed him. I am sorry now, for surely all this trouble and thunder in the night would have driven him out from his home in the wall to keep me company.

It would not be so bad if it were not for the skull. Three times in the last half-hour I have started to take it down from its shelf over my crude stone fireplace, where pine logs are blazing. But each time I have fallen back, shivering, into the bed-like chair I have made for myself out of saplings and caribou skin. It is a human skull. Only a short time ago it was a living man, with a voice, and eyes, and brain—and that is what makes me uncomfortable. If it

were an old skull, it would be different. But it is a new skull. Almost I fancy at times that there is life lurking in the eyeless sockets, where the red firelight from the pitch-weighted logs plays in grewsome flashes; and I fancy, too, that in the brainless cavities of the skull there must still be some of the old passion, stirred into spirit life by the very madness of this night. A hundred times I have been sorry that I kept the thing, but never more so than now.

How the wind howls and the pines screech above me! A pailful of snow, plunging down my chimney, sends the chills up my spine as if it were the very devil himself, and the steam of it surges out and upward and hides the skull. It is absurd to go to bed, to make an effort to sleep, for I know what my dreams would be. To-night they would be filled with this skull—and with visions of a face, a woman's face—

Thus far had Steele written, when with a nervous laugh he sprang from his chair, and with something that sounded very near to an oath, in the wild tumult of the storm, crumpled the paper in his hand and flung it among the blazing logs he had described but a few moments before.

"Confound it, this will never do!" he exclaimed, falling into his own peculiar habit of communing with himself. "I say it wont do, Phil Steele; deuce take it if it will! You're getting nervous—sentimental—almost homesick. Ugh, what a beast of a night!"

He turned to the rude stone fireplace again as another blast of snow plunged down the chimney.

"Wish I'd built a fire in the stove instead of there," he went on, filling his pipe. "Thought it would be a little more cheerful, you know. Lord preserve us, listen to that!"

He began walking up and down the hewn log floor of the cabin, his hands deep in his pockets, puffing out voluminous clouds of smoke. It was not often that Philip Steele's face was unpleasant to look upon, but to-night it wore anything but its natural good humor. It was a strong, thin face, set off by a square jaw, and with clear, steel-gray eyes in which just now there shone a strange glitter, as they rested for a moment upon the white skull over the fire. From his scrutiny of the skull Steele turned to a rough board-table, lighted by a twisted bit of cotton cloth, three-quarters submerged in a shallow tin of caribou grease. In the dim light of this improvised lamp there were two letters, opened and soiled, which an Indian had brought up to him from the Nelson House the day before. One of them was short and to the point. It was an official note from headquarters ordering him to join a certain Buck Nome at Lac Bain, a hundred miles farther north.

It was the second letter which Steele took in his hands for the twentieth time since it had come to him here, three hundred miles into the wilderness. There were half-a-dozen pages of it, written in a woman's hand, and from it there rose to his nostrils the faint, sweet perfume of hyacinth. It was this odor that troubled him—that had troubled him since yesterday, and that made him restless and almost homesick to-night. It took him back to things—to the days of not so very long ago when he had been a part of the life from which the letter came, and when the world had seemed to hold for him all that one could wish for. In a retrospective flash there passed before him a vision of those days, when he, Mr. Philip Steele, son of a multi-millionaire banker, was one of the favored few in the social life of a great city; when fashionable clubs opened their doors to him, and beautiful women smiled upon him, and when, among others, this girl of the hyacinth letter held out to him the tempting lure of her heart. Her heart? Or was it the tempting of his own wealth? Steele laughed, and his strong white teeth gleamed in a half contemptuous smile as he turned again toward the fire.

He sat down, with the letter still in his hands, and thought of some of those others whom he had known. What had become of Jack Moody, he wondered—the good old Jack of his college days, who had loved this girl of the hyacinth with the whole of his big, honest heart, but who hadn't been given half a show because of his poverty. And where was Whittemore, the young broker whose hopes had fallen with his own financial ruin; and Gregson, who would have cut off ten years of his life for her—and half-a-dozen others he might name?

Her heart! Steele laughed softly as he lifted the letter so that the sweet perfume of it came to him more strongly. How she had tempted him for a time! Almost—that night of the Hawkins' ball—he had surrendered to her. He half-closed his eyes, and as the logs crackled in the fireplace and the wind roared outside, he saw her again as he had seen her that night—gloriously beautiful; memory of the witchery of her voice, her hair, her eyes firing his blood like strong wine. And this beauty might have been for him, was still his, if he chose. A word from out of the wilderness, a few lines that he might write to-night—

With a sudden jerk Steele sat bolt upright. One after another he crumpled the sheets of paper in his hand and tossed all but the signature page into the fire. The last sheet he kept, studied it for a little—as if her name were the answer to a problem—then laid it aside. For a few moments there remained still the haunting sweetness of the hyacinth. When it was gone, he gave a last searching sniff, rose to his feet with a laugh in which there was some return of his old spirit, hid that final page of her letter in his traveling kit and proceeded to refill his pipe.

More than once Philip Steele had told himself that he was born a century or two after his time. He had admitted this much to a few of his friends, and they had laughed at him. One evening he had opened his heart a little to the girl of the hyacinth letter, and after that she had called him eccentric. Within himself he knew that he was unlike other men, that the blood in him was calling back to al-



most forgotten generations, when strong hearts and steady hands counted for manhood rather than stocks and bonds, and when romance and adventure were not quite dead. At college he took a civil engineering course, because it seemed to him to breathe a spirit of the big outdoors; and when he had finished he incurred the wrath of those at home by burying himself for a whole year with a surveying expedition in Central America.

It was this expedition that put the finishing touch to Philip Steele. He came back, a big-hearted, clear-minded young fellow, as bronzed as an Aztec—a hater of cities and the hot-house varieties of pleasure to which he had been born, and as far removed from anticipation of his father's millions as though they had never been. He possessed a fortune in his own right, but as yet he had found no use for the income that was piling up. A second expedition, this time to Brazil, and then he came back—to meet the girl of the hyacinth letter. And after that, after he had broken from the bondage which held Moody, and Gregson, and Whittemore, he went back to his adventures.

It was the North that held him. In the unending desolations of snow and forest and plain, between Hudson's Bay and the wild country of the Athabasca, he found the few people and the mystery and romance which carried him back, and linked him to the dust-covered generations he had lost. One day a slender, athletically built young man enlisted at Prince Albert for service in the Northwest Mounted Police. Within six months he had made several records for himself, and succeeded in having himself detailed to service in the extreme North, where man-hunting became the thrilling game of One against One in an empty and voiceless world. And no one, not even the girl of the hyacinth letter, would have dreamed that the man who was officially listed as "Private Phil Steele, of the N. W. M. P.," was Mr. Philip Steele, millionaire and gentleman adventurer.

None appreciated the humor of this fact more than Steele himself, and he fell again into his wholesome laugh as he placed a fresh pine log on the fire, wonder-

dering what his aristocratic friends—and especially the girl of the hyacinth letter—would say if they could see him and his environment just at the present moment. In a slow, chuckling survey he took in the heavy German socks which he had hung to dry close to the fire; his worn shoe-packs, shining in a thick coat of caribou grease, and his single suit of steaming underwear that he had washed after supper, and which hung suspended from the ceiling, looking for all the world, in the half dusk of the cabin, like a very thin and headless man. In this gloom, indeed, but one thing shone out white and distinct—the skull on the little shelf above the fire. As his eyes rested upon it, Steele's lips tightened and his face grew dark. With a sudden movement, he reached up and took it in his hands, holding it for a moment so that the light from the fire flashed full upon it. In the left side, on a line with the eyeless socket and above the ear, was a hole as large as a small egg.

"So I'm ordered up to join Nome, the man who did *this*, eh?" he muttered, fingering the ragged edge. "I could kill him for what happened down there at Nelson House, M'sieur Janette. Some day—I may."

He balanced the skull on his fingertips, level with his chin.

"Nice sort of a chap for a Hamlet, I am," he went on, whimsically. "I believe I'll chuck you into the fire, M'sieur Janette. You're getting on my nerves."

He stopped suddenly and lowered the skull to the table.

"No, I won't burn you," he continued. "I've brought you this far and I'll pack you up to Lac Bain with me. Some morning I'll give you to Bucky Nome for breakfast. And then, M'sieur—then we shall see what we shall see."

Later that night he wrote a few words on a slip of paper and tacked the paper to the inside of his door. To any who might follow in his footsteps it conveyed this information and advice:

NOTICE!

This cabin and what's in it are quasheed by me. Fill your gizzard but not your pockets.

STEELE, Northwest Mounted.



## II

Steele came up to the Hudson's Bay company's post at Lac Bain on the seventh day after the big storm, and Breed, the factor, confided two important bits of information to him while he was thawing out before the big box-stove in the Company's deserted and supply-stripped store. The first was that a certain Colonel Becker and his wife had left Fort Churchill, on Hudson's Bay, to make a visit at Lac Bain; the second, that Buck Nome had gone westward a week before and had not returned. Breed was worried, not over Nome's prolonged absence, but over the anticipated arrival of the other two. According to the letter which had come to him from the Churchill factor, Colonel Becker and his wife had come over on the last supply-ship from London, and the Colonel was a high official in the Company's service. Also, he was an old gentleman. Ostensibly he had no business at Lac Bain, but was merely on a vacation, and wished to see a bit of real life in the wilderness.

Breed's grizzled face was miserable.

"Why don't they send 'em down to York Factory or Nelson House?" he demanded of Steele. "They've got duck feathers, three women, and a civilized factor at the Nelson, and there aint any of 'em here—not even a woman!"

Steele shrugged his shoulders as Breed mentioned the three women at Nelson.

"There are only two women there now," he replied. "Since a certain Bucky Nome passed that way, one of them has gone into the South."

"Well, two then," said Breed, who had not caught the flash of fire in the other's eyes. "But I tell you there aint a one here, Steele, not even an Indian—and that dirty Cree, Jack, is doing the cooking. Blessed Saints, I caught him mixing biscuit dough in the wash basin the other day, and I've been eating those biscuits ever since our people went out to their trap-lines! There's you, and Nome, two Crees, a 'half' and myself—and that's every soul there'll be at Lac Bain until the mid-winter run of fur. Now what in Heaven's name is the poor old Mrs. Colonel going to do?"

"Got a bed for her?"

"A bunk—hard as nails!"

"Good grub?"

"Rotten!" groaned the factor. "Every trapper's son of them took out big supplies this fall and we're stripped. Beans, flour, sugar 'n' prunes—and caribou until I feel like turning inside out every time I smell it. I'd give a month's commission for a pound of pork. Look here! If this letter aint 'quality' you can cut me into jiggers. Bet the Mrs. Colonel wrote it for her hubby."

From an inside pocket Breed drew forth a square white envelope with a broken seal of red wax, and from it extracted a folded sheet of cream-tinted paper. Scarcely had Steele taken the note in his hands when a quick thrill passed through him. Before he had read the first line he was conscious again of that haunting sweetness in the air he breathed—the perfume of hyacinth. There was not only this perfume, but the same paper, the same delicately pretty writing of the letter he had burned more than a week before. He made no effort to suppress the low exclamation of astonishment that broke from his lips. Breed was staring at him when he lifted his eyes.

"This is a mighty strange coincidence, Breed," he said, regaining his composure. "I could almost swear that I know this writing, and yet of course such a thing is impossible. Still, it's mighty queer. Will you let me keep the letter until to-night? I'd like to take it over to the cabin and compare it—"

"Needn't return it at all," interrupted the factor. "Hope you find something interesting to tell me at supper—five sharp. It will be a blessing if you know 'em."

Ten minutes later Steele was in the little cabin which he and Nome occupied while at Lac Bain. Jack, the Cree, had built a rousing fire in the long sheet-iron stove, and as Steele opened its furnace-like door, a flood of light poured out into the gathering gloom of early evening. Drawing a chair full into the light he again opened the letter. Line for line and word for word he scrutinized the writing, and with each breath that he drew he found himself more deeply thrilled by a curious mental excitement which it was

impossible for him to explain. According to the letter Colonel and Mrs. Becker had arrived at Churchill aboard the London ship a little over a month previously. He remembered that the date on the letter from the girl was six weeks old. At the time it was written, Colonel Becker and his wife were either in London or Liverpool, or crossing the Atlantic. No matter how similar the two letters appeared to him he realized that, under the circumstances, the same person could not have written them both. For many minutes he sat back in his chair, with his eyes half-closed, absorbing the comforting heat of the fire. Again the old vision returned to him. In a sub-conscious sort of way he found himself fighting against it, as he had struggled a score of times to throw off its presence, since the girl's letter had come to him. And this time, as before, his effort was futile. He saw her again—and always as on that night of the Hawkins' ball, eyes and lips smiling at him, the light shining gloriously in the deep red gold of her hair.

With an effort Steele aroused himself and looked at his watch. It was a quarter of five. He stooped to close the stove door, and stopped suddenly, his hand reaching out, head and shoulders hunched over. Across his knee, shining in the firelight, like a thread of spun gold, lay a single filament of a woman's hair.

He rose slowly, holding the hair between him and the light. His fingers trembled, his breath came quickly. The hair had fallen upon his knee from the letter—or the envelope, and it was wonderfully like *her* hair!

From the direction of the factor's quarters came the deep bellowing of Breed's moose-horn, calling him to supper. Before he responded to it Steele wound the silken thread of gold about his finger, then placed it carefully among the papers and cards which he carried in his leather wallet. His face was flushed when he joined the factor. Not since the night at the Hawkins' ball, when he had felt the touch of a beautiful woman's hands, the warmth of her breath, the soft sweep of her hair against his lips as he had leaned over her in his half-surren-

der, had thought of woman stirred him as he felt himself stirred now. He was glad that Breed was too much absorbed in his own troubles to observe any possible change in himself or to ask questions about the letter.

"I tell you it may mean the short birch for me, Steele," said the factor gloomily. "Lac Bain is just now the emptiest, most fallen-to-pieces, unbusinesslike post between the Athabasca and the Bay. We've had two bad seasons running, and everything has gone wrong. Colonel Becker is a big one with the Company. Aint no doubt about that, and ten to one he'll think it's a new man that's wanted here."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Steele. A sudden flush shot into his face as he looked hard at Breed. "See here, how would you like to have me go out to meet them?" he asked. "Sort of a Welcoming Committee of One, you know. Before they got here I could casually give 'em to understand what Lac Bain has been up against during the past two seasons."

Breed's face brightened in an instant.

"That might save us, Steele. Will you do it?"

"With pleasure."

Philip was conscious of an increasing warmth in his face as he bent over his plate. "You're sure—they're elderly people?" he asked.

"That is what MacVeigh wrote me from Churchill; at least he said the Colonel was an old man."

"And his wife?"

"Has got her nerve," growled Breed, irreverently. "It wouldn't be so bad if it was only the Colonel. But an old woman—ugh! What he doesn't think of she'll remind him of, you can depend on that."

Steele thought of his mother, who looked at things through a magnifying lorgnette, and laughed a little cheerlessly.

"I'll go out and meet them anyway," he comforted. "Have Jack fix me up for the hike in the morning, Breed. I'll start after breakfast."

He was glad when supper was over and he was back in his own cabin smoking his pipe. It was almost with a feeling of shame that he took the golden hair from his wallet and held it once more so that



" Mr. Steele, will you forgive me for looking in at you and waking you ? "

it shone before his eyes in the firelight.

"You're crazy, Phil Steele," he assured himself. "You're an unalloyed idiot. What the deuce has Colonel Becker's wife got to do with you—even if she has golden hair and uses cream-tinted paper soaked in hyacinth? Confound it—There!" and he released the shining hair from his fingers so that the air-currents sent it floating back into the deeper gloom of the cabin.

It was midnight before he went to bed. He was up with the first cold gray of dawn. All that day he strode steadily eastward on snowshoes, over the Company's trail to the bay. Two hours before dusk he put up his light tent, gathered balsam for a bed, and built a fire of dry spruce against the face of a huge rock in front of his shelter. It was still light when he wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down on the balsam, with his feet stretched out to the reflected heat of the big rock. It seemed to Steele that there was an unnatural stillness in the air, as the night thickened beyond the rim of firelight, and, as the gloom grew still deeper, blotting out his vision in inky blackness, there crept over him slowly a feeling of loneliness. It was a new sensation to Steele, and he shivered as he sat up and faced the fire. It was this same quiet, this same unending mystery of voiceless desolation that had won him to the North. Until to-night he had loved it. But now there was something oppressive about it, something that made him strain his eyes to see beyond the rock and the fire, and set his ears in tense listening for sounds which did not exist. He knew that in this hour he was longing for companionship—not that of Breed, nor of men with whom he hunted men, but of men and women whom he had once known and in whose lives he had played a part—ages ago, it seemed to him. He knew, as he sat with clenched hands and staring eyes, that chiefly he was longing for a Woman—a woman whose eyes and lips and sunny hair haunted him after months of forgetfulness, and whose face smiled at him luringly, now, from out the leaping flashes of the fire—tempting him, calling to him over a thousand miles of space. And if he yielded—

The thought sent his nails biting into the flesh of his palms and he sank back with a low curse that held more misery than blasphemy. Physical exhaustion rather than desire for sleep closed his eyes, at last, in half-slumber, and after that the face seemed nearer and more real to him, until it was close at his side, and was speaking to him. He heard again the soft, rippling laugh, girlishly sweet, that had fascinated him at the Hawkins' ball; he heard the distant hum and chatter of other voices, and then one loud and close—that of Chesbro, who had unwittingly interrupted them, *and saved him*, just in the nick of time.

Steele moved restlessly; after a moment wriggled to his elbow and looked toward the fire. He seemed to hear Chesbro's voice again as he awoke, and a thrill as keen as an electric shock set his nerves tingling when he heard once more the laughing voice of his dream, hushed and low. In amazement he sat bolt upright and stared. Was he still dreaming? The fire was burning brightly and he was aware that he had scarce fallen into sleep.

A movement—a sound of feet crunching softly in the snow, and a figure came between him and the fire.

It was a woman.

He choked back the cry that rose to his lips and sat moveless and without sound. The figure approached a step nearer, peering into the deep gloom of the tent. He caught the silver glint of the firelight on heavy fur, the whiteness of a hand touching lightly the flap of his tent, and then for an instant he saw a face. In that instant he sat as rigid as if he had stopped the beat of his own life. A pair of dark eyes laughing in at him, a flash of laughing teeth, a low titter that was scarce more than a rippling throat-note, and the face was gone, leaving him still staring into the space where it had been.

With a cough to give warning of his wakefulness, Steele flung off his blanket and drew himself through the low opening of the tent. On the extreme right of the fire stood a man and woman, warming themselves over the coals. They straightened from their leaning posture as he appeared.



"This is too bad, too bad, Mr. Steele," exclaimed the man, advancing quickly. "I was afraid we'd make a blunder and awaken you. We were about to camp on a mountain back there when we saw your fire and drove on to it. I'm sorry—"

"Wouldn't have had you miss me for anything," interrupted Steele, gripping the other's proffered hand. "You see, I'm out from Lac Bain to meet Colonel and Mrs. Becker, and—" He hesitated purposely, his white teeth gleaming in the frank smile which made people like him, immensely, from the first.

"You've met them," completed the laughing voice from across the fire. "Please, Mr. Steele, will you forgive me for looking in at you and waking you up? But your feet looked so terribly funny, and I assure you that was all I could see, though I tried awfully hard. Anyway, I saw your name printed on the flap of your tent."

Steele felt a slow fire burning in his cheeks as he encountered the beautiful eyes glowing at him from behind the Colonel. The woman was smiling at him. In the heat of the fire she had pushed back her fur turban, and he saw that her hair was the same shining, red gold that had come to him in the letter, and that her lips and eyes and the glorious color in her face were remarkably like those of which he had dreamed, and of which waking visions had come with the hyacinth letter to fill him with unrest and homesickness. In spite of himself he had reasoned that she would be young and that she would have golden hair, but these other things, the laughing beauty of her face, the luring depth of her eyes—

He caught himself staring.

"I—I was dreaming," he almost stammered. He pulled himself together quickly. "I was dreaming of a face, Mrs. Becker. It seems strange that this should happen—away up here, in this way. The face that I dreamed of is a thousand miles from here, and it is wonderfully like yours."

The Colonel was laughing at him when he turned. He was a little man, as straight as a gun rod, pale of face except for his nose, which was nipped red by the cold, and with a pointed beard as white

as the snow under his feet. That part of his countenance which exposed itself above the top of his great fur coat and below his thick beaver cap was alive with good cheer, notwithstanding its pallor.

"Glad you're good humored about it, Steele," he cried with an immediate tone of comradeship. "We wouldn't have ventured into your camp if it hadn't been for Freda. She was positively insistent, sir. Wanted to see who was here and what it looked like. Eh, Freda, my dear, are you satisfied?"

"I surely didn't expect to find 'It' asleep at this time of the day," said Mrs. Becker. She laughed straight into Philip's face, and so roguishly sweet was the curve of her red lips and the light in her eyes that his heart quickened its beating, and the flush deepened in his cheeks.

"It's only six," he said, looking at his watch. "I don't usually turn in this early. I was tired to-night—though I am not, now," he added, quickly. "I could sit up until morning—and talk. We don't often meet people from outside, you know. Where are the others?"

"Back there," said the Colonel, waving an arm into the gloom. "Freda made 'em sit down and be quiet, dogs and all, sir, while we came on alone. There are Indians, two sledges, and a ton of duff."

"Call them," said Steele. "There's room for your tent beside mine, Colonel, close against the face of this rock. It's as good as a furnace."

The Colonel moved a little out into the gloom and shouted to those behind. Philip turned to find Mrs. Becker looking at him in a timid, questioning sort of way, the laughter gone from her eyes. For a moment she seemed to be on the point of speaking to him, then picked up a short stick and began toying with the coals.

"You must be tired, Mrs. Becker," he said. "Now that you are near a fire, I would suggest that you throw off your heavy coat. You will be more comfortable, and I will bring you a blanket to sit on."

He dived into his tent and a moment later reappeared with a blanket, which he spread close against the butt of a big spruce, within half-a-dozen feet of the



fire. When he turned toward her, the Colonel's wife had thrown off her coat and turban, and stood before him, a slim and girlish figure, bewitchingly pretty as she smiled her gratitude and nestled down into the place he had prepared for her. For a moment he bent over her, tucking the thick fur about her feet and knees, and in that moment he breathed from the heavy coils of her shining hair the flower-like sweetness which had already stirred him to the depths of his soul.

Colonel Becker was smiling down upon them when he straightened up, and at the humorous twinkle in his eyes, as he gazed from one to the other, Steele felt that the guilt of his own thoughts was blazing in his face. He was glad that the Indians came up with the sledges just at this moment, and as he went back to help them with the dogs and packs, he swore softly at himself, for the heat that was in his blood and the strange madness that was firing his brain. And inwardly he cursed himself still more when he returned to the fire. From out the deep gloom he saw the Colonel sitting with his back against the spruce and Mrs. Becker nestling against him, her head resting upon her shoulder, talking and laughing up into his face. Even as he hesitated for an instant, scarce daring to break upon the scene, he saw her pull the gray-bearded face down to hers and kiss it, and in the ineffable contentment and happiness shining in the two faces in the fire-light Philip Steele knew that he was looking upon that which had broken forever the haunting image of another woman in his heart. In its place would remain this picture of love—love as he had dreamed of it, as he had hoped for it, and which he had found at last—but not for himself—in the heart of a wilderness.

He saw now something childishly sweet and pure in the face that smiled welcome to him as he came noisily through the snow-crust; and something, too, in the Colonel's face, which reached out and gripped at his very heart-strings, and filled him with a warm glow that was new and strange to him, and which was almost the happiness of these two. It

swept from him the sense of loneliness which had oppressed him a short time before, and when at last, after they had talked for a long time beside the fire, the Colonel's wife lifted her pretty head drowsily and asked if she might go to bed, he laughed in sheer joy at the pouting tenderness with which she rubbed her pink cheek against the grizzled face above her, and at the gentle light in the Colonel's eyes as he half carried her into the tent.

For a long time after he had rolled himself in his own blanket Philip lay awake, wondering at the strangeness of this thing that had happened to him. It was Her hair that he had seen shining this night under the old spruce, lustrous and soft, and coiled in its simple glory, as he had seen it last on the night when Chesbro had broken in on them at the ball. It was very easy for him to imagine that it had been Her face, with soul and heart and love added to its beauty. More than ever he knew what had been missing for him now, and blessed Chesbro for his blundering, and fell asleep to dream of the new face, and to awaken hours later to the unpleasant realization that his visions were but dream-fabric after all, and that the woman was the wife of Colonel Becker.

### III

It was late afternoon when they came into Lac Bain, and as soon as Philip had turned over the Colonel and his wife to Breed, he hurried to his own cabin. At the door he encountered Buck Nome. The two men had not met since a month before at Nelson House, and there was but little cordiality in Steele's greeting as he went through the formality of shaking hands with his associate.

"I'm going to say howdy to 'em," explained Nome, pausing for a moment. "Deuce of a good joke on you, Steele! How do you like the job of bringing in an old colonel's frozen wife, or a frozen colonel's old wife, eh?"

Every fibre in Steele's body grew tense at the banter in the other's voice. He whirled upon Nome, who had partly turned away.

"You remember—you lied down there at Nelson to get just such a 'job' as this," he reminded. "Have you forgotten what happened—after that?"

"Don't get miffed about it, man," returned Nome with an irritating laugh. "All's fair in love and war. That was love down there, 'pon my word of honor it was, and this is about as near the other thing as I want to come."

There was something in his laugh that drew Steele's lips in a tight line as he entered the cabin. It was not the first time that he had listened to Nome's gloating chuckle at the mention of certain women. It was this more than anything else that made him hate the man. Physically, Nome was a magnificent specimen, beyond doubt the handsomest man in the Service north of Winnipeg; so that while other men despised him for what they knew, women admired and loved him—until, now and then too late for their own salvation, they discovered that his moral code was rotten to the core. Such a thing had happened at Nelson House, and Philip felt himself burning with a desire to choke the life out of Nome as he recalled the tragedy there. And what would happen—now? The thought came to him like a dash of cold water, and yet, after a moment, his teeth gleamed in a smile as a vision rose before him of the love and purity which he had seen in the sweet face of the Colonel's wife. He chuckled softly to himself as he dragged out a pack from under his bunk; but there was no humor in the chuckle. From it he took a bundle wrapped in soft birch-bark, and from this produced the skull that he had brought up with him from the South. There was a tremble of excitement in his low laugh as he glanced about the gloomy interior of the cabin. From the log ceiling hung a big oil lamp with a tin reflector, and under this he hung the skull.

"You'll make a pretty ornament, M'sieur Janette," he exclaimed, standing off to contemplate the white thing leering and bobbing at him from the end of its string. "Mon Dieu, I tell you that when the lamp is lighted Bucky Nome must be blind if he doesn't recognize you, even though you're dead, m'sieur!"

He lighted a smaller lamp, shaved himself, and changed his clothes. It was dark when he was ready for supper, and Nome had not returned. He waited a quarter of an hour longer, then put on his cap and coat, and lighted the big oil lamp. At the door he turned to look back. The cavernous sockets of the skull stared at him. From where he stood he could see the ragged hole above the ear.

"It's your game to-night, M'sieur Janette," he cried back softly, and closed the door behind him.

They were gathered before a huge fire of logs in the factor's big living-room when Philip joined the others. A glance told him why Nome had not returned to the cabin. Breed and the Colonel were smoking cigars over a ragged ledger of stupendous size, which the factor had spread out upon a small table, and both were deeply absorbed. Mrs. Becker was facing the fire, and close beside her sat Nome, leaning toward her and talking in a voice so low that only a murmur of it came to Steele's ears. The man's face was flushed when he looked up, and his eyes shone with the old fire which made Philip hate him.

As the woman turned to greet him Steele felt a suddenly sickening sensation grip at his heart. Her cheeks, too, were flushed, and the color in them deepened still more when he bowed to her and joined the two men at the table. The Colonel shook hands with him, and Philip noticed that once or twice after that his eyes shifted uneasily in the direction of the two before the fire, and that whenever the low laughter of Mrs. Becker and Nome came to them he paid less attention to the columns of figures which Breed was pointing out to him. When they rose to go into supper, Philip's blood boiled as Nome offered his arm to Mrs. Becker, who accepted it with a swift, laughing glance at the Colonel. There was no response in the older man's pale face, and Philip's fingers dug hard into the palms of his hands. At the table Nome's attentions to Mrs. Becker were even more marked. Once, under pretext of helping her to a dish, he whispered words which brought a deeper flush to her cheeks, and when she looked at the



" Sit down, right there, under the man you killed "

Colonel his eyes were fixed upon her in stern reproof. It was abominable! Was Nome mad? Was the woman—

Steele did not finish the thought in his own mind. His eyes encountered those of the Colonel's wife across the table. He saw a sudden, quick catch of breath in her throat; even as he looked, the flush faded from her face, and she rose from her seat, her gaze still upon him.

"I—I am not feeling well," she said. "Will you please excuse me?"

In an instant Nome was at her side, but she turned quickly from him to the Colonel, who had risen from his chair.

"Please take me to my room," she begged. "Then—then you can come back."

Once more her face turned to Steele. There was a pallor in it now that startled him. For a few moments he stood alone, as Breed and Nome left the table. He listened, and heard the opening and closing of a second door. Then a footstep, and Nome reappeared.

"By Heaven, but she's a beauty!" he exclaimed. "I tell you, Steele—"

Something in his companion's eyes stopped him. Two red spots burned in Steele's cheeks as he advanced and gripped the other fiercely by the arm.

"Yes, she is pretty—very pretty," he said quietly, his fingers sinking deeper into Nome's arm. "Get your hat and coat, Nome. I want to see you in the cabin."

Behind them the door opened and closed again, and Steele shoved past his associate to meet Breed.

"Buck and I have a little matter to attend to over at the cabin," he explained. "When they—when the Colonel returns tell him we'll be over to smoke an after-supper pipe with him a little later, will you? And give our compliments to—her." With a half-sneer on his lips he rejoined Nome, who stared hard at him, and followed him through the outer door.

"Now, what the devil does this mean?" Nome demanded when they were outside. "If you have anything on your mind, Steele—"

"I have," interrupted Philip, "and I'm going to relieve myself of it. Pretty?

She's as beautiful as an angel, Buck—the Colonel's wife, I mean. And you—" He laughed harshly. "You're always the lucky dog, Buck Nome. You think she's half in love with you now. Too bad she was taken ill just at the psychological moment, as you might say, Buck. Wonder what was the matter?"

"Don't know," growled Nome, conscious of something in the other's voice which darkness concealed in his face.

"Of course you don't," replied Steele. "That's why I am bringing you over to the cabin. I am going to tell you just what happened when Mrs. Becker was taken ill, and when she went a trifle pale, if you noticed sharply, Buck. It's a mighty good joke, and I know you will appreciate it."

He drew a step back when they came to the cabin, and Nome entered first. Very coolly Philip turned and bolted the door. Then, throwing off his coat, he pointed to the white skull dangling under the lamp.

"Allow me to make you acquainted with an old friend of mine, Buck—M'sieur Janette, of Nelson House."

With a sudden curse Nome leaped toward his companion, his face flaming, his hands clenched to strike—only to look into the shining muzzle of Steele's revolver, with Steele's cold gray eyes glittering dangerously behind it.

"Sit down, Nome—right there, under the man you killed!" he commanded. "Sit down, or by the gods I'll blow your head off where you stand. There—and I'll sit here, like this, so that the cur's heart within you is a bull's-eye for this gun. It's M'sieur Janette's turn tonight," he went on, leaning over the little table, the red spots in his cheeks growing redder and brighter as Nome cringed before his revolver, "M'sieur Janette's—and the Colonel's; but mostly Janette's. Remember that, Nome. It's for Janette. I'm not thinking much about Mrs. Becker—just now."

Steele's breath came quickly and his lips were almost snarling in his hatred of the man before him.

"It's a lie!" gasped Nome chokingly, his face ashen white. "You lie when you say I killed—Janette."



The fingers of Steele's pistol hand twitched.

"How I'd like to kill *you*!" he breathed. "You won his wife, Nome, you broke his heart—and after that *he killed himself*. You sent a report into headquarters that he killed himself by accident. You lied. It was *you* who killed him—by taking his wife. I got his skull because I thought I might need it against you to show that it was a pistol instead of a rifle that killed him. And this isn't the first man you've sent to hell, Nome, and it isn't the first woman. But your next wont be Mrs. Colonel Becker!"

He thrust his revolver almost into the other man's face as Nome opened his lips to speak.

"Shut up!" he cried. "If you open your dirty mouth again I'll be tempted to kill you where you sit! Don't *you* know what happened to-night? Don't you know that Mrs. Becker forgot herself, and remembered again, just in time, and that you've taken a little blood from the Colonel's heart as you took all of it from *his*?" He reached up and broke the string that held the skull, turning the empty face of the thing toward Nome. "Look at it, you scoundrel! That's the man you killed, as you would kill the Colonel if you could. That's Janette!"

His voice fell to a hissing whisper as he shoved the skull slowly across the table, so close that a sudden movement would have sent it against the other's breast.

"We've been fixing this thing up between us, Bucky—M'sieur Janette and I," he went on, "and we've come to the conclusion that we wont kill you, but that you don't belong to the Service. To-night—now—you are a deserter. Understand?"

"You mean—to drive me out—" One of Nome's hands had stolen to his side, and Steele's pistol arm grew tense.

"On the table with your hands, Bucky! There, that's better," he laughed, softly. "Yes, we're going to drive you out. You're going to pack up a few things right away, Bucky, and you're going to run like the devil for your life. To-morrow M'sieur Janette and I will fix up the right story for headquarters, and I don't

mind telling you we'll add just a little for interest, and that the woman and the people at Nelson House will swear to it. You've the making of a good outlaw, Bucky," he smiled tauntingly, "and you'll have some of your old friends after you, good and hard. But M'sieur Janette wants to give you this chance, and you'd better make good time. I'd advise you to go into the West, and not Churchill way. So get a move on, Bucky. You'll need a blanket and a little grub, that's all."

"Steele, you don't mean this! Good God, man—" Nome had half risen to his feet. "You don't mean this!"

With his free hand Philip took out his watch.

"I mean that if you are not gone within fifteen minutes, I'll march you over to Breed and the Colonel, tell them the story of M'sieur Janette, here, and hold you until we hear from headquarters," he said, quickly. "Which will it be, Nome?"

Like one stunned by a blow, Nome rose slowly to his feet. He spoke no word as he carefully filled his pack with the necessities of a long journey. At the door, as he opened it to go, he turned for an instant upon Steele, still holding the revolver in his hand. Fear had gone from Nome's face. It was filled now with a hatred so intense that his teeth shone like the fangs of a snarling animal.

"Some day, Steele," he said, "some day—we'll meet again!"

"Some day," laughed Philip. "Good-bye, Bucky Nome—Deserter!"

The door closed and Nome was gone.

"Now, M'sieur Janette, it's *our* turn," cried Steele, smiling companionably upon the skull, and loading his pipe. "It's *our* turn."

He laughed aloud, and for some time puffed out luxurious clouds of smoke in silence.

"It's the best day's work I've done in my life," he continued, with his eyes still upon the skull. "The very best, and it would be complete, M'sieur, if I could send *you* down to the woman who helped to kill you."

He stopped, and his eyes leaped with a sudden fire. "By George!" he exclaimed, under his breath. His pipe went out; for



many minutes he stared with set face at the skull, as if it had spoken to him and its voice had transfixed him where he stood. Then he tossed his pipe upon the table, collected his service equipment, and strapped it in his pack. After that he returned to the table with a pad of paper and a pencil, and sat down. His face was strangely white as he took the skull in his hands.

"I'll do it, so help me all the gods, I'll do it!" he breathed excitedly. "M'sieur, a woman killed you—as much as Bucky Nome, a woman did it. You couldn't do *her* any good—but you might—another. I'm going to send you to her, m'sieur. You're a terrible lesson, and I may be a beast; but you're preaching a powerful sermon, and I guess—perhaps—you may do her good. I'll tell her your story, old man, and the story of the woman who made you so nice and white and clean. Perhaps she'll see the moral, m'sieur. Eh? Perhaps!"

For a long time he wrote, and when he had done, he sealed the writing in an envelope and put the envelope and the skull together in a box, and tied the whole with babeesh string. On the outside he fastened another note to Breed, the factor, in which he explained that he and Bucky Nome had found it necessary to leave that very night for the West. And he heavily underscored the lines in which he directed the factor to see that the box was delivered to Mrs. Colonel Becker, and that, as he valued the honor and the friendship of the Service, and especially of Philip Steele, all knowledge of it should be kept from the Colonel himself.

It was eight o'clock when he went out into the night with his pack upon his back. He grunted approval when he found it was snowing, for the tracks, of himself and Nome would be covered. Through the thickening gloom the two or three lights in the factor's home gleamed like distant stars. One of them was brighter than the others, and he knew that it came from the rooms which Breed had fitted up for the Colonel and his wife. As Philip halted for a moment, his eyes drawn by a haunting fascination to that window, the light grew clearer and brighter, and he fancied that he saw

a face looking out into the night—toward his cabin. A moment later he knew that it was the woman's face. Then a door opened, and a figure hurried across the open. He stepped back into the gloom of his own cabin and waited. It was the Colonel, and once, twice, three times he knocked loudly at the cabin door.

"I'd like to go out and shake his hand," muttered Steele. "I'd like to tell him that he isn't the only man who's had an idol broken, and that Mrs. B's little flirtation isn't a circumstance—to what *might* have happened."

Instead, he moved silently away, and turned his face into the thin trail that buried itself in the black forests of the West.

#### IV

Many weeks later, far to the West and South, there came a letter to Philip Steele. It had followed him over many journeys. It was dirty, and crumpled, and ragged at the ends, and when he opened it and read it he was glad that he was alone. There was a great deal in the letter from Colonel Becker, but there was one small part of it which he read over and over again, and it was this:

Thank God, I intercepted the skull and the letter in time. It would have been a terrible punishment, my dear Steele, and it was a terrible punishment—for me. And I deserved it more than she. That very night I went to your cabin to explain, but you were gone. It is simple, is it not? And I know that you, above all others, will forgive.

Mrs. Becker had planned to come with me from Churchill. We wrote to that effect, but at the very last we changed our plans, and my daughter came instead, a little curious, perhaps, to see the man of whom her half-sister had written us so many times. In a spirit of fun Freda suggested that for the first few hours she be allowed to pass as—well, you understand. The joke was carried too far—far enough to let my daughter know that in the space of those few hours she had met one of the most despicable of scoundrels, and one of the noblest of men. God bless you for what you have done. Forgive us. Some day I know that we shall meet again.

"Some day!" breathed Steele.

And as he went alone out into the night, where countless stars were gleaming above, and far over the dome of the earth the aurora was moaning its never-ending song of mystery and desolation, he repeated softly to himself:

"Some day we'll meet again." And he laughed, a trembling throb of happiness in his voice as he added, "It was a good day's work, the best I've ever done. And I did it for you, M'sieur Janette—for you."

## The Pink Hat

BY MRS. LUTHER HARRIS

Author of "Maneuvering of Minerva"

THREE times, as if drawn by some magnet concealed among the gay hats displayed in the windows, Alzina Dwight had turned back and stood entranced. Like Saint Anthony, who in vain turned his mind from carnal things, she remained spellbound, her eyes fastened hypnotically upon a pink hat alluringly displayed on a wire stand.

Its crown was surrounded by a wreath of blush roses, and there were pink crystal dangles all about the brim. In the morning sunlight which struck through the window and focused itself on the pink hat, these dangles seemed to dance like dimples in a laughing face.

"It's precisely the kind of a hat that Lady Gwendolen in 'The Prince's Daughter,' would have worn when she tripped over the velvet lawns to her father's castle—with vassals and serfs to her call," she soliloquized, letting her romantic fancy run riot at its will. "And it's took hold of me like I was possessed. The price mark says six dollars and that's just exactly four dollars more than what I've got."

She glanced down hesitatingly at a parcel which she held, neatly wrapped, under her arm. For a moment the pendulum of indecision swung, then she apparently took her courage in her teeth, for she entered the little shop with an energetic step charged with portent.

Miss Clarissa came forward to meet her, wearing her professional smile and her second-best black alpaca. She was a

tall, flat-chested, extremely thin woman of middle age, who somehow gave the impression of having been run through a mangle. Everything about her was flattened, even her English. A classic severity always characterized her coiffure, her hair being drawn up so tightly from her face that it seemed almost to draw her protesting features after it. Not one lock was ever permitted to wander from its allotted place, and the whole was "slicked" down into a shining surface as if done with a very superior variety of glue. At the back of her head a series of small, tight braids were wound round and round, much like the braided door-mats then in vogue.

Owing to the singularly inconvenient and recurring deaths of relatives, Miss Clarissa seemed always to be in mourning, for no sooner did she shade off into lavender than she was again precipitated into cotton crêpe. Almost every woman in Keoburg had, at one time or another, borrowed Miss Clarissa's long, black, second-best crêpe veil to wear at a funeral. A death was no sooner announced than the veil was to be seen out airing on the line, doubling itself in mournful convolutions.

"I reckon that veil has soaked up more tears than any other piece of crêpe ever wove," she had been heard to say when folding it up and laying it away in readiness for the next funeral. "Seems like it could pretty near get up and follow the remains to the hearse of its own accord."

I aint a doubt that somebody will borrow it to wear at my own funeral. I b'lieve I'd 'most raise up in my coffin to see if it was pinned on straight, me having pinned it onto so many mourning bunnets in my day. I've a mind to leave a will bequeathing it to the town."

As she came in from the back room of the shop, from whence sulphurous fumes also emerged, she took a pin from her mouth and asked deferentially: "Anything I can do for you this morning, Alzina? I've been bleaching out Mrs. Pendergast's last summer's white Leghorn bunnet and blocking it over," she explained, "and I expect you smell sulphur. She wants it blocked in the Gypsy shape, and I want to tell you it's no easy job to block over a Dolly Varden into a Gypsy. And if it was anybody's but Mrs. Pendergast's I wouldn't have undertook it. I will say I never wanted to use blasphemous epitaphs so bad in all my life as I have over that bunnet—and if it had been somebody else's I would have."

Mrs. Pendergast was, in very truth, the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the little town, the potentate who dominated it, the autocrat whose dictum was never questioned. Her parties furnished the standard for "stylish" and correct entertainment, her decision on many questions was final. It was much like the reading of the old Manx laws, once a year on Tinwald height.

Alzina Dwight stood a moment as if tongue-tied with embarrassment.

"If you've got a hat there," said Miss Clarissa, "that you've come in to have blocked over, I'll put it in with Mrs. Pendergast's and do it all with the same smudge; it's a saving of sulphur, to say nothing of one's chances of a bright Hereafter. 'Pears to me I recollect pressing over your yellow straw, twice, but I aint a doubt it would block again all right."

Alzina had placed her bundle on the counter, had walked to the window and taken up the pink hat, and was turning it about—handling it much as a devotee would touch the relics of a saint, or a priest of Buddha dust off the sacred image. Its pink crystal bugles clicked together like castanets, a musical little tin-

kle; she touched the pink roses reverently.

It was apparently by a positive physical effort that she withdrew her eyes from it and said to Miss Clarissa:

"I wonder if you and me couldn't make some kind of a dicker over that hat?" She replaced it very tenderly on its wire stand, took the bundle from the counter, and sat down, her worn hands folded over her parcel.

Miss Clarissa also sat down in a creaking rocker, her alpaca folds throwing out a faint aroma of sulphur. Her mind was evidently on Mrs. Pendergast's bonnet, which might be over-bleaching.

"I guess you know," began Alzina a bit tremulously, "that Hen and I are going to be married a week from Tuesday?"

"Yes," rasped Miss Clarissa grittingly, "I've heard say you was. Well, I guess you're both old enough to know your minds—if a body ever is old enough to know their own minds about matrimony. Neither of you being what might be called spring chickens, I reckon you and Hen have both got all your pinfeathers by now and cut your eye-teeth."

"I aint ever heard of pinfeathers and eye-teeth being found on the same animal," laughed Alzina, too intent on her mission to take offense. She gave the pink hat a loving look before she went on:

"I've got all my wedding things ready, though most of them are made-overs, but I haven't got any what you might call real bridey hat. And I don't think I ever saw a hat in all my live-long life that seemed just like a right-down answer to prayer like that one in your window does. Now you may think that sounds sacrilegious, Miss Clarissa, but it aint. It's straight Gospel truth and I say it without any disreligious intentions. It seems to me like I've just plumb got to have that hat, and it was predestined that I should."

"It's six dollars," said Miss Clarissa with brevity. She folded her sulphur-stained hands in her black taffeta apron and rocked gently.

"It's a pattern hat," she added, "and the millinery drummer I bought it of said it was what *he* would call a daisy. He's an awful cut-up. He said the right

girl under it would look so kissable you'd have to take the other side of the street to be perfectly safe. Are you going to have much of an affair, Alzina?"

Alzina had just withdrawn her eyes from the pink hat as if forced by hydraulic pressure. "No, I hadn't been counting on much of an affair. But I've heard pretty direct that the Daughters of Minerva are circulating a paper to give me a water-set, and it seems to me like, if they are, coffee and doughnuts aint enough. I think I'll pass around pickles and rolls, too. Lettie Hartson has let out in a kind of a way that her folks are going to give me a caster, and Ella Burns asked me would I rather have a butter-knife or a pickle-fork. I've had ten pincushions given me, and a crocheted lamp-mat, and two plush albums, and a tidy with a deer's head done in cross-stitch. Oh, yes, and Maria Collins gave me a motto on cardboard—"The Lord Will Provide—" "

"It's exactly like Hen to hold them sentiments is a contract," cut in Miss Clarissa.

"The more I think about what's been given to me," went on Alzina, calmly ignoring this Parthian arrow left sticking in the back of the absent Hen, "the more I feel like doughnuts and coffee wasn't enough. So I've made up my mind to pass light rolls and pickles—even if the Daughters *should* back down on the water-set." With nervous fingers she began unwrapping the twine about the parcel in her lap.

"You said something about pressing over that yellow straw of mine, Miss Clarissa, but I'll tell you the honest truth—I'm so sick of that yellow straw I'd like to sling it plumb to Jericho and over the hills to Halifax. Now here is the proposition I'm going to make you: I've got two dollars to pay down on that pink hat; then I've got five bottles of Postlethwaite's Bitters that always sells every place for a dollar a bottle. The way I come by 'em was that my brother-in-law broke up in the drug business last Spring and just to help the poor fellow out I bought a dozen of these bitters. Though I didn't exactly know what I was ever going to do with them, me being so healthy, but I thought it was a good

thing to have in the house, as the old lady said about the doorplate, with another woman's name on it, she bought at the sale."

She took a deep inhalation, like a swimmer who braces himself for the dive.

"Now you know as well as I do, Miss Clarissa, that along towards spring every year you get as yellow as saffron, and there's nothing that adds such years on years to a body's looks as getting that kind of a spring yellow."

Miss Clarissa rose with frigid dignity.

"I guess Mrs. Pendergast's bunnet is pretty well set to the mold by now," she enunciated icily, biting off her words as if cutting them with a very sharp pair of scissors. "I haven't any use for bitters, that I know of, and I aint aware that I look any yellower along towards spring than what others do, that I might mention—if I wasn't too polite. Clara-Amelia Stidger was in one afternoon and tried that pink hat on and it became her tip-top. I wouldn't wonder a mite if she was to be back in this afternoon and buy it. And it's my conviction that if she *does* buy it she'll pay cash, and she wont try to work off any old patent bitters on me."

This seemed final and crushing, and Alzina had the pallid look of one who has merely met the unhappy fate foreshadowed by her fears.

She began tying up her parcel with clumsy, tremulous fingers. She dared not even look at the pink hat.

"Oh, very well then, Miss Clarissa," she gave forth wearily. Her voice sagged like the seams of her cotton poplin. She winked rapidly to keep back the tears and made futile efforts to swallow the lump in her throat.

"Oh, very well, then. I just stopped in while passing and thought I'd give you a chance to get five bottles for the price of four. It occurred to me that maybe you didn't really know how awful yellow you *do* get along toward spring, almost like yellow jaundice, I've heard folks say. Seems as if you'd almost cast a reflection like a basket of lemons."

With this parting shot she walked to the front door—but no longer with the buoyant step of one jaunty with hope.



As she stood with her hand on the latch her eyes yearned over the pink hat and rested there, lovingly. Her whole attitude seemed to sigh: "'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour." She bade a long farewell to that lost dream in the window.

Now Miss Clarissa, although forty and a spinster, was not entirely devoid of that saving sense of humor which "rainbows the tears of the world." And suddenly she laughed out, showing bare upper gums that were entirely without teeth.

"Now, see here, Alzina," she demanded with less austerity than was her wont, "what in the name of glory did you think I'd want with five bottles of pizen, anyway? It's sure to be one of those patent medicines that would kill off a tobacco-worm. You don't think I'm homesick for Heaven, do you?"

But suddenly an astonishing change swept over Alzina's face. She looked at Miss Clarissa's bare gums and a little laugh came up in her throat, only half a laugh, because born of swallowed tears.

Before she spoke she fortified herself by one swift, caressing look at the pink wonder alluringly tip-tilted on its wire stand. It was almost as if it smiled and beckoned, and her glance at it braced her lax body like a stimulating tonic.

"I declare it's too bad, Miss Clarissa, that you took all that calomel when you had chills and fever last Fall, and got salivated, and lost your upper teeth. It's a plumb shame. There's nothing makes a body look so old before their time as what losing their teeth does. There's a dentist that comes here off and on, one of the traveling kind, that puts in sets of teeth for eight dollars. Of course you're not as young as you used to be, Miss Clarissa, and then again you're not near so far gone as some. Ever think of trying that traveling dentist?"

"It isn't likely I'd have any eight dollars to pay for teeth," snapped Miss Clarissa, "what with paying shop rent, and buying goods, spring and fall, and having half of them left over to get fly-specked—and styles changing like they do. D'you think I'm the United States mint?"

Alzina's struggling laugh had matured into a chuckle. She held up an admonitory finger: "If Clara-Amelia Stidger comes in while I'm gone you tell her that hat is took. Anyway she would look like putty in it, and every identical freckle would stand out like a pin-head. It's funny how some folks will buy a hat that they *know* aint becoming—just because it looks good on somebody else. You go and take Mrs. Pendergast's bunnet off the mold and I'll be back in less than three-shakes-of-a-jiffy."

With that she was off, speeding down the street with her rejected bottles carefully balanced on one arm. Half an hour later she returned, coming in with a breezy alertness, not even pausing to feast her eyes on the *chef d'œuvre* in the window. She seated herself somewhat breathlessly, holding a small box wrapped in tissue paper.

"Now, Miss Clarissa, I'm sure we can make a dicker between us, this time," she began, her faded eyes very bright with anticipation. And she unwrapped the paper about the little box.

"You see, it's like this: when my Aunt Henrietta died last June—dropping off terrible sudden with heart-stoppage—she had just paid twenty dollars for a new set of teeth on a gold plate that had never been took out of the box. She had brought them home that very day, and was putting them away in the top drawer of the bureau, when she was took. And suddenly, without any warning, she went to where it don't make any difference. I mean about teeth.

"In dividing up the things what she left, somehow or other these teeth fell to me. Now I haven't any more use for them than a goose has for galoshes, and I don't allow that I ever will have. They sure are awful fine teeth, and I aint a doubt they would fit you like wax, Miss Clarissa, there not being any particular difference, so far as I can make out, in the roofs of people's mouths. I allow they are all made pretty much off the same pattern. Now if you are willing to take these teeth—they never having beentook out of the box—and give me the pink hat in exchange we'll call it even. Honest across my heart, they was twenty-dollar



teeth, and here's the receipt from the dentist showing my Aunt Henrietta paid for them. Seems like I want that hat worse than a hard-drinking man ever wanted a dram. I've just plumb *got* to have it. Now it looks to me like this is a great chance for you and a chance for me."

This clinching peroration so pleased her that she repeated it with convincing emphasis: "It's a chance for you and a chance for me. It looks like it's just really-for-sure providential, me having those teeth on my hands, as it were, and you needing them like what you do. If that pink hat was a free entrance ticket into Heaven I couldn't want it worse. There's Mrs. Pendergast, now, driving up for her bunnet. Of course she wont get out and come in for it like common mortals would, she expects folks to tote things out to her like she was the Queen of Sheba out doing her errands while her beau was to his club. Now if this little deal is all right, Miss Clarissa—"

But already that beaming spinster had the little box in her hand and her face was a garden of smiles. "It certainly does look like the workings of Providence, Alzina, as you said," she agreed with melting fervor, "those teeth might have dropped right out of Paradise, I'm that glad to get them. It's just like the hand of Destiny was behind you pushing you straight to this milliner shop. I'll just wrap the hat up in this newspaper, I haven't time to hunt up a box because I can't keep Mrs. Pendergast waiting. I'd sooner think of keeping all the crowned heads of Europe a-setting outside in their chariots than what I would Mrs. Pendergast in that basket phaëton of hers. If you'd like this shape blocked over next summer, Alzina, bring it in and I'll do it, free gratis for nothing. It seems like I can't ever be thank-

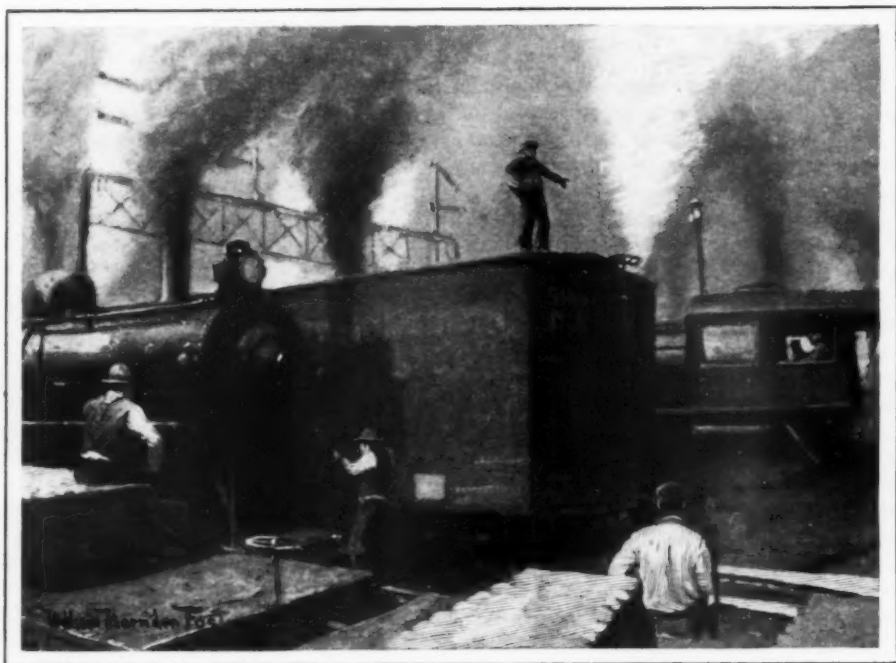
ful enough for your Aunt Henrietta having died and left you those teeth." She fairly purred with a cattish joy as she handed Alzina the bundle. "It aint done up very well. But you know how it is, when Mrs. Pendergast wants anything she *wants* it."

She walked to the door, smiling urbanely upon the dignified autocrat who sat in stately isolation, being a heavily upholstered person, wearing a brocaded polonaise and holding the whip as if it were a scepter.

"Your bunnet is done, Mrs. Pendergast," bustled Miss Clarissa, "I'll bring it right out." She hurried back to the workroom, calling over her shoulder to Alzina as she ran: "Good day, Alzina; look out for which side of the street you walk on when you see any millinery drummers." She laughed and disappeared, breathless with sudden panic at having kept Mrs. Pendergast waiting.

As Alzina walked off, carrying the pink dream that had come true, Miss Clarissa, once more back on the sidewalk, addressed herself to her best-paying customer:

"Your bunnet took the mold beautiful, like it was hot wax, Mrs. Pendergast. It's as stiff and set as a hard-shell crab. I don't know when I ever enjoyed bleaching a bunnet so much. Alzina Dwight has just bought that pink hat that was in the window—you know—the one that had crystal dangles on. Of course it's years and years too young for her, and she'll look like the Witch of Endor and all get-out in it, but you know what a woman is when she gets her head set on a thing—especially a hat. Her and Hen are going to be married a week from Tuesday, and I only hope he wont see her in that hat before she's got him. Well, anyway, it was a great bargain for Alzina—at six dollars."



"Men, with men's hearts"

## The Lift of the "Black Ball"

BY RALPH W. GILMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM HARNDON FOSTER

WE were sitting on the porch of Wharton's double-roofed bungalow, in Los Vegas, a railroad division point on the S. P. & S. L. in the southern Nevada desert. Wharton was an old friend of mine who had something to do with the operation of the trains at that place, and I had stopped over on my way to Salt Lake to renew boyish acquaintance. The month was August, and the thermometer hanging on the side of the house showed at that minute a hundred and seventeen degrees.

"Isn't that exceptional?" I asked, mopping my face.

Wharton laughed, a weary, resigned, half-hearted mockery of a laugh.

"It hasn't been less, during the day, for four weeks," he said; "and it wont

begin to mend for another four. Eight weeks of it—that's our yearly dose. But do you wonder?"

I followed his finger across probably thirty miles of glaring white sand, thinly marked with clumps of scrubby mesquite. The end of the view was a line of ragged, ashen peaks. North, east, west, south, it was the same—burning, leafless desert.

"It's all old sea-bed," Wharton explained. "You will find the shells out there now. The forces that piled up those mountains cut it off from the ocean. It dried away, inch by inch, for a thousand years until it was gone. The water levels are still furrowed in the hills. It's a curious land. Up Leastalk way there are turtles—sea turtles once—but clumsy

dry-landers now, with flipper-like legs, living in a blaze of sand; and out yonder where you looked, the earth is still so hot from volcanic fire that nothing will root but the scrub mesquite—the state experimented to see. There's nothing like it anywhere. We live literally between two fires."

"But why do men stay?" I asked.

Wharton looked down the street. The six o'clock whistle at the round-house had just blown, and strings of greasy workmen in blue overalls were straggling townward from the yards.

"Because they are men, I suppose," he said after a minute's pause, "men, with men's hearts. Watch that!"

Two doors beyond, one of the workmen was turning into a yard. A four-year-old child that had been playing in the shady side of the house rose from a clutter of broken glassware and building blocks and came tearing down the path, screaming her pleasure. A heat-blانched face appeared at the screen, watching the scene with a smile.

"That's why," Wharton explained. "They come here, and work here, and endure the heat and the desert, because there are a few more dollars each month—which means more of the good things of life to-day, and a home by-and-by in a greener land. But don't think they are mercenary; it's a mistake. They are a brave, big-hearted set. If you need a helping hand you will find a dozen stretched out. On the other hand, cross one of them and you'll sigh for panthers. There was Harry Litts, for instance—'Dutch Harry' they called him in the yards."

"Tell me of him."

"After supper, maybe. Come; it's ready." And I followed him into the little dining-room where a fan vainly beat the swelter. We ate languidly, the oppression of the desert heavy upon us.

When we returned to the porch, a change had been wrought in the landscape. The sun had slipped down behind the ragged peaks, staining them with the softest of purple and violet; the long, bare miles lay in restful shadow; a ground-dove called in the dwindling day; and a whisper of wind, refreshing as water, breathed in our faces.

"There is something in that, too, that holds," Wharton exclaimed, reading the wonder on my face. "There's a fascination in the desert, that, once you are used to it, will draw you back from the ends of the earth. Live here a year, and you will understand."

We sat in silence until the lights died on the hills, and the stars began to sparkle. Then Wharton leaned back in his chair.

"I was speaking of Litts," he said. "He was an inspector here on the night shift. You know that at all division points there are men who examine all in-coming and out-going trains. It's considered a responsible position. Upon them depends the safety of the rolling stock, and upon the safety of the stock hangs the safety of the passengers. A piece of imperfect equipment, a broken wheel flange, a cracked sill, a missing beam hanger, may mean the loss of lives and thousands of dollars in property. To avoid such casualties the company keeps the inspectors. It's a responsible position, as I said, and the inspector must not only be an accomplished mechanic, selected after a five to seven years' severe apprenticeship, but must also be a man of nerve. His business often takes him under the wheels of a live train, that is, a train with a locomotive attached. Only a muscular, nervy, intelligent man can fill the place."

"Litts had all these requisites. He had the body—he was five-foot ten, weighed a hundred and eighty, stripped, with most of it in chest and fore-arm muscle; was afraid of nothing; and on top of all was the best mechanic in the yards. That was the kind of an animal he was."

"He came here off the S. P. Before that, he was a pilot on a Hamburg tramp steamer carrying oil from Galveston. He jumped ship at that port, after kicking the mate into the sea—because he didn't like the food—and came west. At Tucson he got a job in the shops, worked up to inspector, and transferred here for the increase in pay."

"I'll tell you what he did once. It was shortly after his arrival. Somebody's wife was dying at Salt Lake, and Somebody was trying to outrun death with a special train. They struck here at the change of

the shift with a pair of bad wheels. There wasn't any car they could substitute—they keep all the spare coaches at the terminals—and the only possible way was to put in a new pair. That meant time. It's considered a two hours' job for two men. The man with the 'special' was frantic. Two hours might prove too late. He ran about offering a thousand dollars to anybody who would cut the time in half. Litts heard the offer, and learned the reason. He had been on duty then for thirty-six hours, taking another man's place, but he threw off his coat, and set to work. In forty-five minutes there was a pair of new wheels under the coach. The man offered him a handful of bills. Litts shoved them back at him. 'Did you think I was doing that for money?' he said, and walked away.

"A month later he created a sensation by marrying the daughter of old Williams, who pulls the 'Limited.' She was one of those lively, peach-pink types, with a head of her own. Everybody was after her who saw her once. There wasn't a man in the yards, from call-boy up, who hadn't tried to win her, and there wasn't a man of them who ever trod the walk to her door a second time, except Litts. They all came back frosted. Litts himself was making slow progress until the incident of the 'special.' After that there was some hasty stitching on wedding duds.

"That was the beginning of life for him; before, he had only existed. They bought a house on installments, the green and white one you see this side of the corner—he wasn't the kind to be homeless—and proceeded to stock it with children. They had two, a boy and a girl, peach-pink, like their mother, and muscled like Litts himself. Litts was so happy that he wouldn't have traded places with the president of the road, and John D., with all the flying eagles in his strong box, couldn't have bought one of his kid's smiles. His whole existence was the color of those hills a while ago.

"It would have remained that way, I guess, if it hadn't been for Walling. He was the yard watchman here during the 'panic.' You recall the time. One day

it was train chasing train, overworked, sleepy crews, overworked engines, overloaded cars, and all departments short of help. The next day, a sawed-off sixty-ton switcher could have handled the traffic, while men sprang out of the earth by the hundreds, begging for work. It was bad here, men discharged right and left, and sidings jammed with dead equipment; but further north it was worse. The men lay around, eating and drinking up their summer's wages, waiting for work to reopen, and when it did not they began to drift south ahead of the winter, riding the trains. The company paid but little attention to their stealing a ride, but when they began to burn cross-ties and bridge timbers at their camp-fires, and had broken into a meat car or two, they objected, and put out watchmen. That was how Walling came.

"He perhaps wasn't a bad kind at heart, but was the relative of some high-up official, put in by 'pull,' and like most of the 'pull' kind, was important beyond his worth. He thought he had a tough job, and that he must show himself a tough man, equal to the task. His pride centered around his nerve. Question his courage, or raise a laugh at his expense, and it set him boiling with the meanest kind of anger. He had a long tale that he told about how he had single-handed whipped three Chinamen over a crooked card game in a sub-cellar in San Francisco, and then fought his way up through three stories more of them, armed with the hardware of heathendom. He proved the story by throwing a hunch-backed cripple off 'Fifty-Four.' That was the kind of a man he was.

"In three days he was the hate of the yards, just as Litts was the favorite. And, strangely enough, the two men were thrown together in their work. While Litts inspected a train for broken parts, Walling searched it for hoboese. When Litts stooped by the side of an outgoing train to see that the undergear was working properly, the detective squatted at his side to see that no jobless, penniless worker clung to its rods. A blind man could have seen consequences.

"The two wouldn't mix any more than





"He would empty the chambers in the direction of the sound!"

oil and water. Litts' sympathies were all with the hoboes, not because they were hoboes, but because they represented the under dog, and Litts had under-dog predilections. He knew, as the detective did not, that the 'boes for the most part, were honest workers, and remembered a time in his own life when he had been one of them. Walling knew nothing of this, having been born above; cared nothing, and looked upon the men as rats in the company's granary, and himself as the company cat. His business was to show his teeth and purge the granary.

"Naturally, as Litts was always trying to help the men to a ride, and pointing out places of concealment, speaking a good word, or standing sponsor to the trainmen for their worthiness to be helped over the road, and as the detective was working to dislodge the men from these same places, there grew up an antagonism between the two. Walling came to regard Litts as a traitor to the company's interests, while the inspector came to see Walling in the light

of a man devoid of human sympathy, and a coward at heart.

"At last there came an open breach. Two fellow-inspectors were thrown out of work by the general slump in traffic and wished to catch a ride on the 'Limited.' Litts spoke for them to the train crew, and vouched for their standing as railroad men. Everything was arranged. The men came down to the train, but as they swung up onto the tender Walling saw them, and ran up with his pistol, shouting to them to 'unload.' They replied by heaving a chunk of coal in Walling's face as the train pulled out, and calling him unsavory names. Walling got even by telegraphing ahead and having the men arrested.

"Litts determined then to rid the place of Walling. He poured into the open ear of the detective stories of watchmen who had been knifed or thrown under the wheels of moving trains by tramps. When he had succeeded in getting Walling's nerves all harrowed up, he would perhaps add that as he was coming to work that morning he had heard a con-



versation in a box car in which the detective's name was mentioned with threats, or that he had seen two desperate looking men sharpening a knife in the mesquite thicket behind the round-house. He kept this up for several days, succeeding so well that Walling took to carrying his guns in his hand and jumping at sudden sounds and shadows.

"Every night the two were present when the 'Limited' left, Litts in the capacity of inspector, and Walling as watchman. 'It would be a good plan for you to keep your eyes open when you are watching the train,' Litts said to him. 'The worst men always ride the fastest trains. I look for trouble most any night.' Then under pretense of making an inspection, just before the train started, Litts would fasten some torpedoes on the rail. With his mind already primed with the idea of bad 'boes, it took no great stretch of imagination for Walling to hear in the detonation the sound of firearms discharged at himself, and to see somewhere in the shadows along the train the dark bodies of his assailants. He would forthwith empty the chambers of his guns in the direction of the sound, and after the passage of the train search the ground for the killed or crippled. Not finding any he would compose a terrible tale of the battle.

"Litts kept this up night after night, and as Walling was always victorious in the encounters, and came away unscathed, he increased the dimension of his tales, making himself out a great hero. Finally, in the presence of the assembled yardmen, after Walling had told of having put to rout four men armed with knives and revolvers, Litts pointed out the empty tins of the torpedoes and explained the whole matter. Everybody of course shouted and laughed at the joke, except Walling. He was the limpest man you ever saw. He tried to speak, but couldn't; started once to pull his gun in anger, but finally sneaked away without a word.

"About an hour later he made a call on the long-distance telephone, and we all thought that he was asking for a transfer. We were therefore delighted.

"But the man stayed. That was the strangest part of it, except that the next night when Litts reported for work the office boy brought him news that he was wanted at the master mechanic's. Litts supposed it was about a bit of extra work, or something; but instead of that he was handed a check and told that he was discharged.

"He asked for explanations. The master mechanic, however, could tell him nothing, except that it was orders from above. He was sorry. Litts' work had been satisfactory—he hated to see him go—but was helpless. Doubtless other master mechanics would be glad to get him; and he penned a letter of recommendation.

"It was a stiff blow, a discharge in the midst of a 'Panic.' Litts, however, was not the kind to lie prostrate under any disaster. He just drew up a check in his wife's name for the sum they had in the bank, gave her orders to pay the monthly installments on the house, and left for the north to look for work.

"She had a card from him at Ogden; another from Salt Lake—cheery little notes in which he sent his love; then, after a week had elapsed, the good news came that he had got work at his trade at Reno. The word spread through the yards, and everybody was as pleased as if he had been the one to get the job. Even Walling expressed a pleasure at the news, and made inquiries as to what road he was working for, what wages, what position, etc. His interest was so genuine and his conduct so different after the affair of the torpedoes, that we felt a little sorry we had humiliated him, and decided that perhaps we had misjudged the man.

"But our joy was short-lived. Three days afterward, one of the boys met Litts' wife, her face all fixed to cry, and was told that Litts had lost his job again, and was coming home.

"Sure enough, in a week he was back, dirty and tired, having ridden the freights to save money, but full of snap, and grim, bull-dog determination to get on somewhere—and after a day's visit with his wife and children, was off again, this time going south. The cir-

cumstances of his second discharge were similar to his first—orders from above. 'Begins to look like somebody had it in for me,' he said, speaking of it. 'If they have, and I find the man, do you know what I would do? I'd break him like this.' He was holding a piece of broom handle in his hands, and snapped it as he spoke.

"On his second trip we kept track of him through his wife. Every day he wrote to her, and every day she told some of us the contents of the letter. One time he would be on the point of getting a job, and we would think that the next letter would confirm the expectation; but always something hindered. Everywhere, it seemed from his letters, there was a surplus of men, and as the weeks went by, and still no job, and Litts went further and further from home, the letters began to get darker in tone, full of the agony of a strong man who sees starvation and want ahead for his family, and is powerless to prevent.

"At last, though, after a month of wandering, and living, he only knew how, there came the news that Litts had work again. It was time, too. All their little savings had disappeared, and things were beginning to look blue at home. His wife had lived, and had kept the children clothed and fed, and had met the installments on the house, but had received notice from the Building and Loan that owing to the stringency in business circles they would be unable to grant any time on future payments other than was specified in the contract, and in case of a lapse in payment would be obliged to take over the property. His wife didn't write him anything of this, knowing he had enough to contend with, but it was no secret in the yards and the boys had planned to take up a collection rather than see it occur. Walling nearly wiped out the last traces of resentment we held against him at this time, by saying that if the hat was passed we could count on him for as much as the next man gave—and made liberal inquiries as to Litts' new job.

"A week passed. Then one day a ragged, dirty giant of a man dropped off a freight and cut across lots to Litts'

home. It was Litts, or rather what was left of him. For the third time, in the same mysterious manner, he had been discharged. He looked ten years older than when he had left, was ugly in temper, and felt the futility of seeking another position. 'Somebody has laid a "black ball" on me,' he said, 'and I've got to lift it—that's all. There is no holding a job until I do.'

"We offered him a loan, but he wouldn't have it. 'It's a job I want, the right to work, and not charity. And it's a job I am going to have, or there will be reasons. Just look at me, the best mechanic on the road, muscle to waste, and the wife and kids suffering. I've got to have a job.'

"But there evidently were reasons, serious reasons, why he could not. The days brought no encouragement. The union did what it could, and the yard hands, to a man, petitioned for his reinstatement, and Litts became a gigantic shadow haunting the master mechanic's office. Gad, but it was awful!

"Strong as he was, and determined as he was, he began to break under it—that and the short rations he was eating. Sometimes he failed to go home at night, unable to face the growing want in his wife's face and listen to the children's innocent babble for things he could not give—and his wife would come with the children, leading one and carrying the other, looking through the yards for him. We would send her home and take up the search ourselves, and maybe find him hulking along between the strings of cars, making inspections and muttering to himself: 'I've got to lift it! I've got to lift it!'

"Then he took to drink. Somebody asked him to the bar one night—Walling, I believe it was—and he went. Before that he hadn't known the taste. He got to liking the sensation. It soothed him, he said, and made him forget. He took to hanging around the saloon all the time, and sank into a state of indifference that was ten times more terrible to look at than death itself. Nothing interested him except an invitation to the bar. He just sat there, dying by inches, dying for the chance to



"I've been lifting the 'black ball'—lifting the 'black ball!'"

work. Think of it—the strongest man in the yard, a man who could lift a draw-bar to its place without a chain, the best mechanic on the road—and sitting there day after day like an invalid! It was heart-breaking.

"But it couldn't last always. There's a load-limit to the toughest steel. Litts was right at this point. We saw it, plain as if it was written in red—he either had to lift that black ball, and lift it soon, or the load would crush him beyond all lifting. We wanted to help, and would have helped—but what could we do? We had no jobs to give him, we were only workers ourselves—we could only stand by, as at a fever bed, and wait the turn.

"It came one night in the 'Turf' saloon. Litts was there, sitting as usual at a little table in the corner, his head in his hands. Walling came in, in high spirits, full of his old time brag and bluster.

"'Couple of drinks—both at once,' he called to the bartender, rubbing against the bar.

"The barman set them before him.

"Walling clinked the glasses together, and lifted one. 'Here's to the 'boes,' he called. 'Damn them!' and drained the glass. Then he added: 'There's nothing on earth I hate so much as a 'bo. A 'Chink's' a son of Perdition, and a Greaser is bad, but beside the 'bo, they are gentlemen. Do you know, I'd get up, the darkest, worst night that ever was and go a hundred miles just to nip one of these dirty gentlemen by the neck. But if luck holds, I won't have to go that far to-night, no, nor near it. There's nothing like using your brains. Out on the 'hospital spur' I've got one of the finest 'bo-traps set and baited you ever saw: two feet of nice, clean straw in the bottom of a 'freezer.' Lord, but it's lovely—a regular Waldorf. Say, but it will be a show to see them bite. Here's the picture. Two 'boes, weary, oh, so weary, maybe more than two—perhaps half-a-dozen. They see the straw and crawl up into it. They fall asleep. In the midst of their dreams of riding freight I will appear. Slam goes the door. They are

caught. Every door is bolted fast. They couldn't break out with a sledge. Lord, but there's going to be a surprise out there! Waiter, another glass.'

"The second glass was set before him and he continued: 'After the haul, I'm going to Salt Lake to take a rest. You won't see me around here again soon. So here's to you, your health—and here's to the 'boes again—curse them, and curse their friends, too, and their friends' families;' and swallowed.

"Something heavy and solid stirred at his words over in the corner, and we heard a sound that was like a bulldog gritting his teeth. Walling heard it and dropped his glass.

"'What is it?' he asked, turning to the barkeeper.

"'The wind, I guess,' he answered, gathering up the broken glass. That's the stock answer out here. We lay everything we can't explain to the wind. You have no idea what strange things it will do. It will come up in the night and blow, in little puffs and flaws that are almost life-like. A window or a door will rattle as if a hand had hold of it. You go to look—nothing there. It's almost human at times. It takes you years to get used to it.

"The explanation made Walling breathe a little easier.

"'I thought for a minute it was something else,' he said. 'Give me another drink.'

"The drink was served, but this time he drank it without any toast.

"'Now I want to use the long-distance 'phone,' he said, and went to the booth. It was in the corner near where Litts was sitting, and so close that Litts could hear what Walling was talking about. Walling, it seemed, had a coyote or something of the kind, crowded to the edge of a precipice, and wanted to make the final shove. The man, or company, at the other end of the line had some sort of grip on the situation, and could make the shove. That was the substance of the conversation.

"Now what would you have done if you had been in Litts' fix and had it pop suddenly into your head that maybe you were the coyote referred to, and that the

detective was responsible for your fix—loss of jobs, and all that? Wouldn't that sort of rouse the animal in a man of Litts' build? Don't you think, that if it was you, you would want to do something for the sweetest woman in the whole world, and your own blood?

"Well, what Litts did was, at first, nothing. He sat there as though he hadn't heard anything, and let Walling go out. Then he got up and followed.

"I remember the night. I had been down at the station and was coming home through the yards. It was one of those nights where the wind goes wandering around in little, mischievous puffs in a great acreage of silence—a kind of nervous stillness. You jump at each shadow, and are alarmed at each sound. I could hear the noise of the town as if it was at my side: a phonograph over in the 'Turf' was playing 'Turkey in the Straw'; a child was crying with the heat—Litts' child, I think it was—and its mother was rocking it to sleep with a lullaby. I could even hear the creak of the rocker as it went over the floor. Then the phonograph ceased, the child hushed—and in the silence I heard, over to my right, footsteps crunching along in the cinders. I stopped a minute, wondering who was abroad in that part of the yards at that time of the night. Then I heard a muffled slam, as of a heavy door going shut, a rattle of iron; then silence again, silence and moonlight—the silence of the desert night. I hurried ahead, alarmed at nothing, unless it was the silence.

"At the end of the yards I met Litts. He was bare-headed, shirt open at the throat as he always wore it when on a rush job, and was carrying a piece of timber over his shoulder like a musket.

"'Name of Heaven, Litts,' I said—he looked so big and wild—'What have you been doing?'

"'Doing?' he repeated, and laughed a horrible, animal laugh, looking over toward the town with the yellow moon shining in his staring eyes. 'Doing? I've been lifting the black ball! Lifting the black ball!'

"That was all I could get out of him. I thought he was mad. But the next morning before I was out of bed he knocked at my door. I saw at once that he was a different man. His head was up, something of the old-time ring was in his voice. He was the Litts that had changed the bad pair of wheels and cheated death.

"'The black ball's lifted,' he said, 'and I'm going to work. I'll take that loan you offered and I'll pay it back soon.'

"I gave him the money, and that night he shook my hand and the hand of every man in the yard, and took the train for the South."

Wharton paused; it was obviously the end of the story. But I wanted to know the ultimate end. Probably he read my mute inquiry when the match flickered over his pipe.

"You are going to Salt Lake, you say? Well, when you get there, look out the window. There will be yardmen coming and going—all kinds of men—but if you see a man among them with the shoulders of an ox, walking along the train, peeping under it—and as he peeps, tapping the wheels with a hammer, that's Litts. Only don't call him by that name—he's Renalds now. Tell him you are a friend of mine, and just from Los Vegas. He will be glad to see you.

"Walling? Oh, he got caught in his 'bo-trap. The wind blew the door shut on him. He was dead of thirst when we found him. This wind out here is almost human at times."



# The Mettle of The Man

BY  
LEILA BURTON WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY  
ROBERT EDWARDS

AS the speaker stepped backwards, half-stunned by the whirlwind of applause that surged toward him from the densely packed auditorium, I lifted my eyes to his face, seeking, with the eager, ubiquitous curiosity of the professional journalist, to detect and uncover, even for one probing instant, the tremendous forces hidden behind the impregnable front that he presented to the world. But the face that my eyes searched with restless intensity was in repose, grave, almost phlegmatic; for the mighty fires in the eyes were stilled, and there was an inexpressibly stony settling of the muscles about the jaws and cheek-bones. The figure, too, was so ponderously and unevenly proportioned and so loosely put together, that the man might have been an overgrown school boy, save for lines in his face which we deem terrible in youth but regard listlessly as time passes—seeing in them only the struggles, the strifes, the conquests; yea, and the sins of the drifting days.

Incontrovertibly, the man was built to conquer, for there was no visible weakness to be assailed. Physically and mentally he domineered, compelling the pigmies about him, driving yet refusing to be driven. Hard, almost cruelly just, and certainly uncomfortably honest for politicians, the world had learned to judge him by the scattered characterizations of the newspaper wits; for he held intimacy at arm's length, and repaid interest with



The man might have been an overgrown schoolboy

indifference. Closing a door in the world's face, he stood defending it with an immutable calm that defied prying curiosity. I had known the work but never the man, and it was the "ego" behind that superb, merciless machine that fascinated me.

For, estimating and judging, looking through narrowed eyes, and weighing, (who knows), perhaps with a narrow mind, a tale I had listened to rather listlessly earlier in the day returned to me. It was the story of a miserable, cringing creature, scarcely worthy of the cognomen of man, who had lost his all through weakness, if not criminal negligence, and had begged desperately, pridelessly for mercy—just mercy.

"Mercy!" I could readily imagine the stern lips of the gubernatorial candidate unlocking to emit the words: "Who

expects mercy nowadays? Do you suppose I was nurtured and matured on mercy? No, come to me for justice, if you like; when you seek mercy, go elsewhere!"

Yes, undoubtedly a hard man, and cold! Yet even as I turned to give my thought audible expression, some one proposed another round of cheers, and, the cyclone of enthusiasm engulfing the audience a second time, I saw an indefinable expression passing over the face I was watching. An expression that in the first shock of surprised inquiry I was constrained to call "supplication," but later to name a most pitiful and childlike pain! It seemed to me for a moment as if the man, standing on the mountain-top of achievement, looked down on the way he had traveled, and looking, shuddered—because of the awful and uncommunicated loneliness that possessed his soul! Because of the bleak wastes behind, and the bleak stretches before, and of a crying want that no voice had stilled and no hand eased!

"By Jove!" I ejaculated under my breath, almost unconscious that I was speaking aloud, "I wonder if, after all, that human machine *feels*?"

Judge Trent smiled, and ignoring my question, propounded one of his own.

"I suppose," reaching for his hat, "that there is no doubt of his election?"

"Doubt!" I retorted excitedly, following him as he forced his way into the cool night air. "Doubt! I tell you, that man is going to hold this country in the hollow of his hand! I don't understand him; I can't place him; I won't agree with his policies, but he is that unusual thing we find a good many counterfeits of, and very seldom see—a Great Man!"

The Judge smiled: "You think that?"

I nodded. "He has succeeded in overcoming almost all personal emotion, and that engenders strength. He is naturally hard and almost inhumanly cold; both qualities render progress possible."

But the Judge was not listening. "A great man!" he repeated meaningly, "and fifteen years ago—well, well!" interrupting himself; "you have judged, and possibly your judgment is righteous, and yet—inhumanly cold' you called him. Now, if I were to tell you—"

"Tell me what?" the newspaper instinct leaping to meet the suggestion in his words.

"Just a story," he rejoined, smiling retrospectively. "An odd story, when you come to consider subsequent—"

Again he interrupted himself.

"Well!" I demanded, "Why do you stop?"

He shook his head, "Because I am afraid you scent some leaded type; and this—but we are only a block from the Club, and if you like, I will talk a bit; but remember, not for print, my dear boy, not for print."

"Not for print," I repeated sullenly. "Are you going to rob me even before I know the value of what I am to be robbed? Come, now, Judge, that's hardly fair."

He paused in the light that fell in white electric glory over the Club steps.

"There are some things that do not belong to the public," he reminded me gently, "and if this were my own story I would not wish it repeated even by one man to another, as I am going to repeat it to you. But it is *not* my own, and—Ah, well! we are all human; and because it *is* unusual, and you are a good listener, I am tempted—"

He handed his hat to the attendant with a gentle greeting and that superb dignity of mien that belonged to him, both in public and in private life, and I followed him into the Club.

"We seem to have the world to ourselves," he remarked, strolling through the empty corridors to the reading-room, where the remains of a huge fire lay glowing on the hearth. "What will you have, my dear boy?"

"Nothing," stretching myself into a waiting armchair with a gesture of self-denial. "Nothing, my dear Judge, but the forbidden story. I feel as if I could wring a tear drop out of any old kind of material to-night—a tear drop with a little choky laugh behind it—you know the kind!"

He leaned for an instant on the mantel shelf, shaking his head and staring into the red heart of the fire.

"You make me almost afraid to trust you," he began. "Seriously now—"

I laughed. "Am I a thief, my dear Judge?" I asked, with a half-satirical, half-offended movement of my shoulders.

He shook his head, twisting his cigar thoughtfully between his thumb and forefinger. "I don't know—even you might be tempted, if you saw what newspaper men call a 'good thing' slipping through your fingers."

I blew a whiff of smoke ceilingward. "And is this what newspapermen call a 'good thing?'"

He nodded. "I can safely say that every paper in New York would work overtime to print it—especially at this psychological moment."

I leaned forward. "And you are not going to let me—"

He shook his head, "No!"

"Well, I must hear it, at any rate," with a nervous narrowing of my eyelids. "You can't refuse me that."

He smiled. "Oh, you shall hear it, never fear. It was—let me see, I will have to go back to the days when a five dollar bill looked about the biggest thing in creation to me; to the days when I was all inspiration and aspiration!"

He smilingly dropped himself into a chair and laid his arms along the cushions and his white head against the dark leather.

"Do you know, my dear Martyn," he ruminated, without turning his head in my direction, "that in those days I was so poor—so confoundedly poor—that I used to hang around my offices until twilight so that the blessed dusk should conceal my shabbiness and the shiny patches of my trousers. I used to dodge around those back streets hugging my infernal pride and looking for all the world like a sneak thief—"

He ran his hand through his hair with a gesture almost boyish in its abandon.

"But," I began, leaning forward impatiently, "you haven't—"

"Oh, you want the story?"

I moved my hand deprecatingly. "If you don't object—"

"No, I don't object. We old fellows must remember that this generation can't wait for anything—"

"But your pleasure," inclining my head with humorous deference.

He smiled, "Certainly not for that! But I won't test your patience.

"It was, I remember, my first case. Ah, that first case, Martyn! How we anticipate it! How we picture it! How we fight it over in our minds! How we win it again and yet again! Well, well!"

"As you know, I began my professional career in Seattle. That was before the boom days, when it was a little straggling, struggling town. I had one poor—very poor—room, and a gorgeous, large—very large—sign over the door, reading:

ALONZO B. TRENT,  
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW.

"When things were dull, I used to go and look at that sign.

"Well, one morning, my first case walked in. It was not a very opulent or prepossessing case; just a shabby, cheaply dressed woman of the type one sees behind the counters in second rate department stores, pathetic in her tawdry pretensions from our point of view, but vitally interesting to the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. She was slight and small, and possessed, I remember, a pair of large reproachful brown eyes. She had come to ask me to represent her brother, who was a minor, against the S. O. Telegraph Company, for failure to deliver a message.

"She was the kind of woman who weeps effectively, and having comfortably seated herself, and cleverly gotten her opening sentence out of her mouth, she produced a black bordered handkerchief and proceeded to bury her face in its inky folds. Her sobs were loud, arrogant and heartrending, and I was, as I have told you, young at the time, and ready to sympathize with anything feminine, and especially anything feminine in distress. I implored her to desist, assured her of my willingness to defend her in any way in my power; in fact, to do anything and everything to bring to her peace of mind.

"Well, eventually my eloquence was rewarded, and she removed her handkerchief from a slightly blurred, but still pretty face, and little by little, I drew



"She had come to ask me to represent her brother"

her story from her. I thought it a pitiful tale then, and I think it so now.

"It appeared that she had—Saturday morning, say the twenty-fourth of June; I have forgotten the exact date, but any will serve—sent her only brother, who was working for the N. P. Railroad Company in Bellingham, a telegram stating that their mother was dangerously ill, in fact, had but a few hours to live! The message was addressed to the number on Elm Street where he had been lodging when she had last heard from him—139 Elm Street was, I believe, the exact address. Funny how those things come back to one.

"Well, Mrs. Gates—Mrs. Kate Gates was her name—carried the message herself to the office, though she could ill afford to leave her mother at the time, and herself watched the clerk at the telegraph-office check it off. It consisted of the few words, 'Come at once, mother is dying,' and was signed 'Katie.' Mrs. Gates requested the clerk to rush it

through, and impressed upon him that it was a matter of life and death. Then, feeling that she had done all in her power, she returned to the bedside of her mother, who was delirious, calling ever and continuously for her son.

"Mrs. Gates said that the boy had been the very apple of her mother's eye, that for years the frail thread of her life had flickered on, fed by the idolatrous fire of her love. And it seemed as if she could not go, without touching him, hearing his voice! She lay, the daughter said, in those last hours, her wan, old face turned to the door, her eyes feverish with expectancy, her husky voice calling, always calling—

"Mrs. Gates, to still that forlorn and piteous cry, would make a pretense of leaning from the window; of listening for the footsteps that did not come, of whispering hopeless words of comfort that broke against that wavering wail of 'Johnny, Johnny, Johnny!' All through the long summer day, death fought a bat-



tle with the mother love that seemed stronger even than the last enemy. But at eight o'clock, Mrs. Gates, realizing that the end was near, called up the telegraph-office and asked if any word had been received. She was informed by them that there had been no message of any sort!

"In utter despair, she returned to her mother, to find her sitting up in bed, half-conscious, an expression of such delirious joy flooding her face, that for an instant the daughter, meeting it, held her breath.

"*'Listen!'* she whispered, in an awe-struck voice. *'Listen! Don't you hear? He is coming!'*

"Mrs. Gates said that the tone was so sane, the passion of joy in the voice so convincing, that for a moment, she half-expected to hear her brother's step on the stair! But there was no sound, save the fearful rattle of the breath in the closing throat; no sound save her own suffocating heart-beats. She tried to force the trembling old form back on the pillow, but with a superhuman effort, her mother flung her off.

"*'I must meet him!'* she cried wildly. *'Don't hold me! He is coming! My boy! My boy!'*

"Then, in the heartrending and vacuous silence that followed that cry, the struggle ended. The chest crumpled inward, and two hopeless tears forced themselves from under the shrunken eyelids. The daughter caught the stiffening form up in her arms, crying out tragically,

"*'Wait! Mother, wait! He is coming! He will come. Just wait!'* But it was too late. The weary head fell back, and the tears in her eyes were wiped away by God. She was dead!"

For a moment the Judge paused, and with a little half-ashamed, half-humorous sigh, drew his hand over his eyes.

"Confound it!" he said. "I can't tell it even now without making a fool of myself."

"And she died without seeing him?" I asked, the red heart of the fire wavering before my misty eyes.

"Yes, she died without seeing him! Mrs. Gates immediately dispatched to her brother a second message, addressed

in care of the Superintendent of the N. P. Railroad Company, Bellingham. The message read: *'Come at once. Mother is dead!'* She signed it, *'Mrs. Kate Gates.'* To this message also she received no answer, and after hoping against hope, on Monday morning her mother was interred."

For a moment there was silence, and then I repeated my former words, scarcely conscious that I was repeating them. "And she died without seeing him."

"Yes, she died without seeing him," the Judge responded grimly. "And needlessly, too."

"As it appeared later, on Saturday, the twenty-fourth of June, her brother *was* living in Bellingham, *was* in the employ of the N. P. Railroad Company in the capacity of night call boy; working for the company at night, and sleeping during the day; *was* living at 139 Elm Street, and *was* asleep in his room at that address all of Saturday; and that on Monday morning, about ten o'clock, on arising, he found under his door two postal cards, left by the postman, each dated Saturday, June twenty-fourth, requesting that he call at the S. O. Telegraph Company and obtain a message received there for him. One of the postal cards was addressed 139 Elm Street; the other care the Superintendent's Office, N. P. Railroad Company, Bellingham. Both were delivered by the postman at the Elm Street address on Monday morning!"

"Great Scotland!" I ejaculated, horrified. "What inhuman negligence!"

Judge Trent smiled, "That was just what I was contemplating impressing upon the jury. But, to continue:

"Mrs. Gates' brother dressed immediately and hurried to the telegraph-office, received the two messages sent by his sister on June twenty-fourth, and wired her that he would leave Bellingham on the afternoon train. When the message was transmitted, the remains of his mother had, of course, already been interred. Mrs. Gates impressed upon me the disastrous effect that the shock had produced upon her brother's health. She said that he had appeared half-stunned since the news had reached him, refused



to take any interest in his work, and spent all his days and most of his nights by his mother's grave, muttering foolishly to himself, and that she seriously feared for his reason.

"Well, to make a long story short, I accepted the case, and at once filed suit against the Telegraph Company, suing in the name of Mrs. Gates, as 'next friend,' this being necessary, as he was a minor. The case looked favorable to me from every aspect, and I had visions of a fifty dollar fee (which seemed stupendous to me in those days) and of an impassioned address to the jury in favor of my much-abused client."

Judge Trent paused to smile reminiscently.

"Well," I demanded with irritable interest. "Well?"

He regarded me for an instant, through ironically half-closed lids.

"It was not well, as it turned out, my dear Martyn. It was anything but well."

"On the day of the trial, a perfect case was made out with Mrs. Gates and her brother. It was apparently only a question of what amount the jury would award damages. I was suing for one thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars; and they would naturally consider the affection existing between a minor son and his mother, the mental anguish suffered by the son in being denied the right to see his mother before her death, or to attend her funeral."

"Well, so far, so good. The negligence was proved conclusively, and I had just settled back in my chair with a feeling of exquisite satisfaction permeating my entire being, when, to my surprise, horror, and chagrin, the defendant, the S. O. Telegraph Company, introduced their testimony, showing that the mother—the apparently well-loved mother—had died in the poor-house!"

"The poor-house!"

Judge Trent smiled sarcastically. "Yes," with grim enjoyment of the situation; "the poor-house! All my fine castles proceeded to tumble about my head. I shrank into my threadbare suit and wished it were large enough to efface me completely—"

"The poor-house!" my words choked

with laughter. "By Jove! That was a corker."

The Judge pushed the white hair from his dauntless old forehead. "As you say, and rather forcibly, my dear Martyn, it *was* a 'corker!' Some of your expressions are really quite apt. Mrs. Gates had, as you may surmise, concealed this delicate bit of evidence from me with a truly womanlike sagacity. Rather inconsistent, wasn't it—to sue for mental anguish, claiming deep affection, and demanding some substantial recovery therefor, when the parties suing had permitted their old mother to be confined in the poor-house and there die! Jove! It makes me wrathful even to think of my sensations at that moment."

"There was no light permeating my horizon anywhere; nor did I contemplate, with any degree of satisfaction, that impassioned address I was about to make to the jury."

"The Telegraph Company was introducing Mr. J. R. Crane, the Superintendent of the poor-house. I listened perfunctorily; the case I thought already lost. The witness took the stand with a sidling, unobtrusive movement that was suggestive of a personality which had hugged dark corners persistently, and had a wholesome and natural distaste for the light. He was a thin, cadaverous creature, who looked as if he would have bartered his eternal salvation for a square meal, and I haven't a doubt that the outer crust did not belie the inner man, for his soul, I am convinced, was exceedingly thin, pitifully narrow, and incredibly small. Well, he testified that on the day after the funeral, he had gone to Mrs. Gates' rooming-house to leave some clothing belonging to her mother, and when he walked into the house, had found her sitting on a trunk, with one man on the trunk by her, and another on a chair in front of her, she with one of their hats on, smoking a cigaret!"

"An electric shock went through my relaxed body!"

"The evidence was inadmissible, as Mrs. Gates was not a party to the suit, only *pro forma* as 'next friend,' and this statement was a direct, vicious, and uncalled-for attack upon her chastity and

character! I saw in it at once a loophole of escape! I was assured she would deny any such occurrence, and it is human nature to take the under dog's side, and she was the type of woman who gave ample room for play on the emotions of the jury! I began to scent my speech, and again it looked good to me.

"I had forgotten everything but the desire to fight, and to fight to win; to worst the other fellow or burst a blood-vessel—or something equally vital—in the attempt.

"I placed Mrs. Gates on the stand, and she, of course, denied that there was any such occurrence as had been testified to by Crane; she said that it would have been impossible for him to have seen her in the position described, as she was out all the forenoon of the twenty-eighth; that he had possibly mistaken one of her boarders for her; that she was poor and obliged to let her rooms to the first applicant, and could not always inquire closely into their character and deportment. (Tears.) I further showed by her that she was running a little rooming house, consisting of about four rooms (tears); that she received therefrom only forty dollars a month; that her rent was twenty-five dollars, leaving only fifteen dollars wherewith to support and clothe herself (tears); and that of this amount she had used half to keep her mother in medicines at the poor-house! (Tears.)

"I then introduced her brother as a witness. He was a tall, half-grown boy of about seventeen, shabbily dressed and loosely jointed—not a prepossessing witness. He gave his answers mechanically, as if they were dragged from him without his being cognizant of their import. I remember thinking, at the time, that he was decidedly wanting, both in feeling and intelligence.



"He was a half-grown boy of about seventeen"

"The questions and answers were short, sharp, and to the point.

"You have heard Mr. Crane, superintendent of the poor-house, testify that your mother died in that institution. Why did you allow her to pass her last days in such an establishment?"

"For a moment there was silence. Then in a dull and meaningless tone, he answered:

"I had no money!"

"You had no money? When did you go to Bellingham?"

"June 5th."

"Why did you go there?"

"To get work. I tried to get a job in Seattle, but they wouldn't give me anything. So I went to Bellingham."

"You secured employment in Bellingham?"

"Yes, they gave me a job as night call boy with the N. P. Railroad Company."

"When did you go to work for the N. P. Company?"

"June 10th."

"What at?"

"Thirty-five dollars per month."

"Then, if you were earning thirty-five per month, why did you not send your mother money to supply her needs? Why did you allow her to die in the poor-house?"

"He turned on me a look of dumb protest."

"The N. P. only pays on the 20th of the month following the month you work. I did not get any June wages until July 20th. When I got my wages, my mother was dead!"

"That answer told. There was a stir in the court-room."

"How did you get to Seattle, hoping to attend your mother's funeral, if you had no money?"

"The boy lifted his heavy eyes to my face. 'Mr. Wade, the Superintendent of the N. P. Company, gave me a pass,' he said."

"Well, my dear Martyn, I made my impassioned address to the jury after all, and to speak impartially, it was impassioned! The fires of youth, love, hope, ambition, were all bottled up inside of me, and I hurled them at those twelve men without let or hindrance. Suffice it to say they were only out a few minutes, and returned a verdict in favor of the boy for nine hundred dollars."

"But—" I began in nervous anticipation.

The Judge held up his hand rebukingly. "The end is yet to come." He paused with evident enjoyment. "The story is yet to be told."

"You mean?" excitedly.

He leaned forward so that the fire-light fell full upon his majestic old face.

"This is the story, my dear Martyn," he said impressively. "After Court had adjourned, I congratulated Mrs. Gates and approached her brother, who had crept away to a corner of the court-room and sat huddled on one of the benches. I indicated his dejected figure to his sister with a slight gesture of my head, 'Your brother does not seem overjoyed at our victory,' I remarked, trying to keep elation at my success from showing in my voice."

"She shrugged her shoulders. 'He is an odd boy,' she complained pettishly,

'I can't understand him. I never have understood him! Nobody did but mother; and—'

"I don't know just how she was going to complete her sentence, for at that moment the Clerk of the Court detained her and I went on alone to that strange, huddled figure on the bench."

"Well, my boy!" I cried, jovially, laying my hand on his bent shoulder and giving him a little joyful shake, 'it was a good victory, eh? A fine fight! We've won, you know, against all odds. We've won!'

"Won?" He lifted his face to mine, and to my horror I saw that great burning tears were rolling unheeded down his cheeks! Tears that choked the ready words in my throat and sent the hot embarrassed blood rushing to my face."

"Won!" he reiterated dully. 'We've won, you say?'

"The jury returned a verdict in your favor for nine hundred dollars!" my tone endeavored to be jubilant.

"For a moment he stared at me with his tear-dimmed, blood-shot eyes, stared at me as if he could not comprehend. Then he threw back his head and laughed as a man laughs who has come for the first time face to face with the almost inhuman tragedy of life."

"Don't!" I stammered, starting away from him. 'Don't—'

"Nine hundred dollars!" he cried in a hoarse, stunned voice. 'Nine hundred dollars; and my mother died in the poor-house! Do you know what that means?'

"For God's sake, hush!"

"I was shaken by the horror in his eyes, and my hand trembled as I stretched it out to lay it on his arm."

"He shook me off, almost violently, and clenched both fists on his knees, the congested veins standing out like ropes on his forehead."

"My mother died in the poor-house!" repeating the pitiful words with an effort at repression more terrible than any out-cry. 'She had a horror of the poor-house, my mother had. 'Johnny, don't ever let them take me to the poor-house,' she used to say. 'Don't ever let them do it, Johnny.' But I couldn't get work! The world wouldn't give me work, and



"I indicated his dejected figure to his sister"



they took her away. They took her away!"

"My boy—" I began, stammering compassionately.

"Oh, don't you try to say anything," shaking his shoulder out from under my hand. 'Do you suppose, with all your fine talk, you can find anything to *say to me* when I *had to let them take her*? Do you think you can pay me for not seeing my mother before she died? For not helping to lay her in her grave? My mother what loved me? Don't try to lay your hand on me. Curse you! You're one of 'em! one of that world out there that I'm going to *settle with*! That I'm going to fight, and fight, and fight, until they *pay me back*! I am going to take, and take, and take, and take; and if they say "Stop!" I'll shut their mouths with: "My mother

died in the poor-house!" They'll have to pay me for that, *damn 'em*! *They'll have to pay me for that!*"

"He had started to his feet, and at the last words, thrust his tortured, convulsed face almost into mine, and I stared at it, awed, realizing that I had uncovered a force that had to be reckoned with, that I was looking with startled eyes at the naked soul of a great man!"

"And—" wetting my dry lips!

"And that boy, once unlettered, unlearned, untutored; ragged, poverty-stricken, and emotion-tossed, has become—"

"Well!"

"The Gubernatorial Candidate we listened to—the superb, merciless machine that fascinated you—to-night!"

## The Undoing of William Percival

BY VIRGINIA WATROUS

ROBERT LAWRENCE BLAKE planted his elbows firmly on his desk, cupped his aggressive little chin in two dirty hands and sighed deeply. Lovers of all ages are prone to sighs, but only the very young and inexperienced are unwise enough to expose their misery to the girl in question. Bobby, alas, was only nine, and his life hitherto had been summed up in baseball, fishing, and school. Nor was there any doubt about his being in love, indeed so deeply submerged was he, that life, to him, was but a vision of wide blue eyes, yellow braids, dimples and the numberless other and more elusive charms that belong to a girl of eight. Add to this woeful state of affairs a rival, a sleekly handsome, always well-behaved boy, who was slowly creeping into the affections of Bobby's chosen lady, and the reasons for his sigh are more apparent.

Bobby's divinity, who rejoiced in the name of Dorothy, dangled her short legs from a seat just opposite Bobby's own. From the bench in front of her, Bobby's

hated rival, William Percival Porter, cast benignly sweet smiles around the room. When Bobby sighed, Dorothy looked up, and finding his wistful, adoring eyes fixed upon her face, she elevated her snub nose a trifle and bestowed a brilliant although somewhat toothless smile on William Percival, who also turned around at that moment. The iron entered Bobby's soul and he wrenched his eyes away. He had been subjected to this treatment painfully often during the last few weeks. Black despair held him for her own for ten long minutes—then suddenly a smile curved his lips and he sat cheerfully erect. Thought, Destiny, or what you will, had opened to him at last, a way to out-Herod Herod. Even though the presence of the protecting big sister, who daily escorted William Percival to and from school, forbade that he "do him up" thoroughly and send him home a mass of blood and rags, as he had often longed to do—there were other and just as effective means to be employed. He would show him that no cowardly-cus-



tard, afraid of a fight—no sissified little dandy could usurp the place of a scarred victim of many battles.

As for Dorothy, well, he would, kindly but firmly, show her the error of her fickle ways, then forgive her and once more assume his old post of pencil-sharpener-in-chief and of escort plenipotentiary on her way to school.

It seemed the irony of fate that William Percival should himself have suggested the wonderful plan to Bobby—for daily observance demonstrated plainly to the latter that the way to Dorothy's heart lay through her stomach and that her most charming smiles were the result of the morning offering—a splendid all-day-sucker—that William Percival daily laid before her. Therefore, since much of William Percival's guileful influence might be said to be due to the said all-day-sucker, Bobby remorselessly decided on a commercial course of action.

Let us skip the days of strict economy that followed that soul-harrowing battles, when the respective charms of shining licorice and blue eyes tugged within him. Suffice it to say that at noon, a week later, he stood alone in the school room, arranging with artistic care two pink-striped bags on Dorothy's desk. In one was five cents' worth of jaw-breakers, hard, round, shiny—in the other a chocolate rat, a most entrancing creature, with pink candy eyes and a pink rubber tail. Having arranged them to his satisfaction Bobby placed over them a large geography, rendering them invisible from the front of the room—for the long-harassed teacher of the third grade had angrily threatened that the next person who brought candy to the room should go to the office.

A little care reduced this danger to a minimum. Still the office loomed unpleasantly dark—undoubtedly it was wise to be cautious. With a sigh of relief he finished his task and sank into his seat, just as the teacher entered. Bobby seemed absorbed in study—his eyes glued on the book he held upside down in his hand. A minute later someone else came and soon the room began to fill rapidly. Still Bobby studied on, with every

nerve strained to hear the familiar and loved voice. Suppose she were to be late; suppose she were to be absent; suppose she were never to come back! Then he heard her in the hallway, and in another minute she entered, with her arms around two of her dearest girl friends—her brief, stiffly starched skirts rustling crisply as she passed up the aisle.

With an impatient sigh she pushed aside her books, and the wonderful chocolate rat came to view.

"Oh—Oh," he heard her cry. "Oh, my, Amy Harrith, come here thith inthant."

Amy Harris came, saw, admired, and said so. With a burning face Robert Lawrence listened to the ensuing conversation.

"Who do you suppose did it?" questioned the divinity.

"William Percival," suggested Amy. Bobby's heart sank to zero, but it rose again when Dorothy shyly approached the unconscious William to proffer her thanks for his glorious gift. For would he not deny all knowledge of the donation? And then, oh, then, would she not guess who the real giver was and bestow upon him a just reward? With very red face Bobby leaned forward, the better to hear what was said.

The teacher had left the room; William Percival was calmly sharpening a pencil over the waste basket. As Dorothy approached he raised his eyes to her face. The questioning gaze was disconcerting and Dorothy twisted her handkerchief nervously.

"Th-thank you for the candy," she began, when the surprise in his face stopped her.

"The candy?" he echoed, doubtfully.

"Yeth, the rat and thingth you left on my dethk."

Denial rose to William Percival's lips, when suddenly his eyes fell upon the flushed, anxious face of Robert Lawrence. There was nothing slow about William Percival and he smiled a smile of angelic sweetness, as he answered with nonchalant ease:

"That! Oh, that was nothing. Don't mention it. Do you want your pencil sharpened?"

The full import of it all struck Bobby with the force of a blow. Black hate gnawed at his heart. Should this bar of shame be permitted to mar the family honor of the Blakes? Should it be said that he, Robert, had met defeat at the hands of a "fraidy cat?" Never! He would lick the whey out of him. He would change his face so that his own mother would not know him and no girl would ever look at him again. With clenched fists he leaped to his feet and—

Just then the bell rang, teacher reappeared and he dropped back into his seat.

Evidently fate was against him. A dark misery settled over him, nor was it lightened by Dorothy, who continued to smile sweetly at the complacent William, between chocolate bites stolen from behind her handkerchief.

The afternoon dragged wearily along. It was near dismissal time when Dorothy returned from a recitation and Bobby saw her chubby hand creep to the pink bags in the corner of the desk. In fascinated horror he watched her open the wrong bag—and saw the hard, round jawbreakers slip past her detaining fingers, strike the floor with a series of rattling bangs, and roll in all directions.

Dead silence reigned; the teacher rose behind her desk.

"Bring that candy to me," she ordered.

With shaking knees Dorothy obeyed.

"Is that all you have?"

Dorothy shook her head and in another minute the half-eaten chocolate rat was gingerly deposited on the teacher's desk.

"Did you bring that candy to school?" continued the inquisitor.

"No."

Dorothy gulped.

"Who did?"

"William Percival," she stammered faintly.

Teacher's accusing eyes sought William's face. William shivered and looked at the floor. Terrors of the office loomed dark before him.

"No, m'am," he denied, "I didn't."

"Oh," accused Dorothy, "You thaid you did."

Just at this crisis Bobby got upon his feet.

"I done it," he confessed listlessly.

Five minutes later, *en route* to the office, he paused and looked at Dorothy as he closed the door. There was no sympathy in her face, and her eyes were glued on an unoffending geography. With a sigh he climbed the office stairs. Since Bobby's feet dangled many inches from the floor, the principal's talk was neither very long nor very severe, and just as dismissal bell was ringing he returned to the Third Reader room. Here, a stern teacher gave him a detested poem to learn. Dorothy was doing similar penance, but she did not so much as glance at him. She finished first and was dismissed. Later he waded through his recitation, pulled his cap from the hook in the hall, and shuffled wearily out the front door.

Life was not worth the living. Women—hard, unfeeling creatures—should hereafter be his special abhorrence. Never more should he allow his soul to be pleased by their strangely entrancing ways. Blue eyes and dimples should have no second glance from him. Surely the cup of woe was his, and he must drain it to the dregs! With dragging feet he started down the walk.

Something blue fluttered past him and was gone. Something warm and sticky was left in his hand; he looked down. It was a note written in her well-beloved, although somewhat wobbly hand. There was a smudge of chocolate across the top—but what of that?

DEER BOBY—

Thanks verry much for the rat. I got it bak. I hoop the prinsipal dont hurt you.

Your frend,

DOROTHY BURR.

P. S.—I'm never going to speak to William Percival agen.

Bobby read it through twice, then thrust it in his pocket. Just then the sun came out, gloriously. He turned down his collar and threw out his chest aggressively. A strange, soft feeling crept over him.

He puckered up his lips and whistled.



The sun was high ere he got away

## The Emir's Concession

BY THOMAS SAMSON MILLER

Author of "Primitive Night," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY OLIVER KEMP

THE Agent leaned forward to tap his briar against the veranda post. His sharp, sallow face, with its coarse nose, came within the murky glow of the swinging hurricane lamp. He half-turned to the American in the deeper shadow of the overlapping roof and drawled with affected nonchalance.

"As man to man, now what *were* you doing in the Borghu district?"

"Great Scott!" The American threw exasperation into the exclamation. "Haven't I spent an hour showing you my trophies?"

"Oh, yes," the other ridiculed. "You come from New York—from America, to the hinterlands of West Africa to bag a couple of lions, three leopards, and a pair of tusks. You pass through the rich hunting grounds of the Lower Niger without firing a shot, all because you

have a special fancy for the Borghu game. You left here for there seven weeks ago, and of those seven precious weeks you spent three at the palace of the Emir of Borghu, no doubt shooting hippopotamuses in his harem."

"You seem to have kept close tab on my movements," the American dryly commented. He mentally reviewed his negroes for the spy.

"Yes, Mr. Grahame, I have kept tab. This is the Royal Sokoto Company's show; when a stranger comes butting in we are curious."

He helped himself from a whiskey bottle placed conveniently at his elbow.

"Your care of that packet in your breast," he continued, "gives me a shrewd guess as to your activities at the palace."

"Guess on," laconically offered Grahame. He smashed a mosquito against

his cheek. "If you wont accept the evidence of those skins, then that's all there's left you." He rose languidly. "I'm turning in. Good-night."

He bobbed under a low entrance into a rude room of four clay walls with a floor mattress in a corner under a mosquito bar. He lit a small, tin kerosene lamp, then took a goat-skin package from his shirt, and kneeling by a kit-bag, slipped it down to a secret pocket between the lining and the cover. A rustle behind him caused him to look up quickly, and he was just in time to see the broad-striped pajamas of the Agent slip from the open doorway. He resurrected the package from its secret pocket and put it under his pillow. Then he pulled off his moccasins, crept into his blankets, and quickly dropped asleep.

He was awakened by a pungent smell in the room. Peering into the half-dark of the tropical night, he made out the darker form of a man kneeling by his grip. Very cautiously he freed his legs of the blanket folds, cleared an opening in his mosquito curtains, breathed a lasting breath, and sprang, panther-like, onto the intruder. Smooth, oiled muscles slipped eel-like through his hands as the naked body somersaulted out of his grip and ran from the room. Grahame sprinted after, to see a negro dart across the compound to the colored quarters.

He turned back into his room, peeping into the Agent's as he passed. The Englishman was apparently in childlike sleep. He lit his lamp and wiped from his hands a coating of palm-oil grease which the intruder had left on them. Then he placed his revolver by his pillow and retired again to his mattress.

He was awakened by tom-toms at the first streaks of the white, calm African dawn. The Agent was already abroad, detailing his colored kingdom to its daily stride. Grahame shouted a buoyant "Good-morning," and asked: "Is there a nigger there with an odor of palm-oil about him?"

"Half-a-dozen such," said the Agent; "all those working amongst the kernels. Why?"

"Because one tried to loot my baggage last night."

The Agent came to him with concern.

"Oh, say, you know, you must have dreamed; we have no thieves in the compound."

"Then my dream materialized a mess on my hands. I caught a nigger rummaging in my kit-bag."

"My dear chap, I'm awf'ly sorry," the Englishman spoke with almost convincing sincerity. "I'll muster the watchman after second chop and palaver them."

"Not on my account, thanks all the same. I don't think I'll wait for second chop; I'm going into the village at once to arrange for canoes to convey me down river."

"My dear Grahame, I can't allow it; you're my guest."

"You are very kind," Grahame unenthusiastically rejoined, "but I am bent on getting away."

"Oh, very well, if you must go," the Agent grinned, as he conceded.

His grin worried Grahame as he went out of the gates towards the village that clung to the adobe walls of the trading station.

"Now, what's he got up his sleeve?" he muttered.

He passed down the regular lines of the huts to the dwelling of the headman. After formal salutations he asked for canoe and men.

The barbarian grunted. "How is your health?"

"Good. How is your health?" Grahame fell with forced patience into the customary formula.

"Pains." The headman put his hand to his rotund stomach. "How is your house?"

"So-so. How is your house?"

"Good. How your wives?"

"Good," lied Grahame as the shortest route to his objective point. "How your wives?"

"Fight las' night. How your piccanninies?"

"Good. And now how much you want for canoe to take me to Lokoja?"

"No fit to let you hab canoe. Company massa say him want all boy for to cut him grass."

So that was the meaning of the Agent's grin.





"Don't apologize"

Grahame wasted no argument on a savage to whom the Company's wishes were law, but hurried back to the compound to have it out with the Agent. He found him in the rubber-shed superintending the cooping of rubber.

Grahame went right to the point.

"Say, Chatteris, that addle-headed rascal says you want all his men for cutting your grass."

"Why, yes, that is so. But a couple of days are nothing to you, are they?" he asked with bland innocence.

"Yes, they are everything," Grahame stormed. "You have hung me up here on one excuse or another until my patience is out."

"My dear Grahame, why didn't you tell me you were in a hurry? I thought, seeing that you fooled three weeks at—"

"Rats!" the other cut in. "You know very well I wanted to get on down. You have invented this grass-cutting idea to stall me off."

"My dear chap," Chatteris laid his hand on Grahame's arm with an exasperating show of friendliness, "I assure you that it is most urgent. The Company has a strict rule about letting the grass grow in the compounds—breeds mosquitoes and gives cover to snakes, you know. If the Agent General happened up here I would lose my head."

Grahame suddenly uncovered the plot.





"By Heavens, you'll take orders from me or I'll blow your brains out"

"So, that is it; you're keeping me here until your Agent General comes up. Well, I tell you flatly, I won't stand for it. I will lodge a complaint with the first American consul I reach when I get out of the country."

The threat electrified the Agent to quick conciliation.

"Oh, come, you needn't get your head off like that. I'll manage somehow about the grass, if it is as important as that to y. u. I'll send a clerk with you over to the headman. And you will want an interpreter for your trip. I will lend you Assala, the boy you had on your Borghu—er—huh."

Grahame accepted the boy of necessity,

but was suspicious of the Agent's sudden and accommodating civility. With the Nubian clerk and Assala he went back to the headman and engaged in a tedious palaver over the quantity of salt and cloth he should pay for the canoe hire. While thus bartering, he was annoyed to see a light canoe speed away from the trading station and sweep down with the stream. He had little doubt now that Chatteris was heralding his coming and adding complications.

The sun was high ere he got away with a long, flat-bottomed, cumbersomely slow dug-out. The smaller canoe was not to be sighted over the shimmering reaches of stilly lagoons and pampas-plumed

sand isles. He made a back rest in the center of the craft by piling his baggage. The kit-bag was on the top. In it he placed his packet. Then he surrendered himself to the monotone tom-tomming that rhythmized the paddle-strokes of the line of muscular, ebony, huge shoulders. In a short while he was drowsing.

He awoke with a start at a movement in his baggage rest. As he looked around he saw his kit-bag disappearing into the Niger. Assala stood near the bag with an overdone expression of benign innocence. Grahame focused his eyes to the eddying swirl in the water that marked the spot where sank the hope of many months of fever, treachery, and daring.

He yelled to his canoemen to back paddle. They knew no English. He shouted to Assala to interpret. The boy was frightened into unwilling obedience by the threat in the voice and the blaze in the eyes of the white man.

As the canoe was slowly backed up the stream, Grahame slipped a grass rope from a bale of skins. To one end he tied a shoe, weighted it with three cans of sardines, and dropped it down to the bag. Then for the first time he raised his eyes from the swirl.

"You black devil!" he apostrophized Assala. "It was you who spied on me through Borghu, eh? Take the end of that line in your hand! Take it! Now go down and tie it to the bag. Go!"

The boy pointed to a horny back and a long snout lying torpidly on the water a few feet away.

"You lie!" shouted Grahame. "I have seen you swimming among crocodiles a hundred times. Go after that bag!"

He caught up a hippo thong.

The boy went overboard and into the river in a clean streak.

Grahame waited. The end of the line came up loosely and trailed away on the river. Still the boy remained below. The dull faces of the canoemen reflected disinterestedness. Every second piled burying sands on the kit-bag. Suddenly the negroes vented a prolonged A-ah! A black body emerged from the river upon a sand isle a hundred yards away. In a flash it crossed the isle and, diving, swam for the bank.

Grahame dared not leave the bag. He looked at the impassive faces of his men. He pointed the river and made signs of hauling on the rope. The black masks were expressionless. Then he had an inspiration. He dived into a case of barter trinkets and produced a small gilt mirror and called the magic word, "Dash!" In a second every man was overboard.

Left to itself, the canoe started down with the current. Grahame thoughtlessly grabbed at the grass rope; the boot and its commissariat came up like a radish out of loam soil. He caught up a paddle, but the clumsy canoe mocked his unskilled efforts to stay its flight. Four hundred yards slipped behind ere he managed to drive the prow onto an island. He leaped ashore and looked back.

Black, cropped heads bobbed on the water, took deep breaths, and disappeared again, feet foremost, to thrash the sandy bottom. The water boiled with the commotion going on below. At last there came up a tentacled mass of limbs clinging, octopus-like, to the kit-bag. It came swimming towards him. Then it found its feet. The ebony figures came up out of the river, shedding the water from their glistening skins, and the negroes brought the bag to his feet. Then they set up a vociferous clamor for the mirror, each man claiming it, and to stem the torrent, Grahame had to deplete his stores to the extent of a mirror to each man.

He examined the pulpy contents of the rescued bag, and to his great joy the goat-skin package had resisted the soaking. Placing it in his shirt, he ordered his men back to the canoe.

As the tom-tom again woke the eerie silence of the bleached solitudes, Grahame surrendered his soul to the charm of the careless land. In a little while the river suddenly narrowed between high banks, with long reaches of forest that exhaled sweet odors and was lively with the chatter of monkey hordes, and the canoemen put aside their paddles and hauled along on the overhanging creepers and sucker-roots. Rounding a palmed point, they suddenly came on a cluster of conical huts.

Disregarding Grahame's commanding gestures, the canoemen ran their craft to the foot of the village and put his baggage ashore. They pointed to the tribal mark scored down their cheeks and the crocodile cicatrized on the foreheads of the villagers, thus explaining that he was now amongst another people. Grahame vigorously expostulated, but he made no impression on the stolidity of their faces and deliberate misunderstanding, and they reëmbarked and sped away up-stream.

He reviewed the situation. Before him was a pot-bellied headman squatting on a stool, who, with a ruffianly backing of wizards and wives, evidently expected to impress the white man with the dignity of his court.

Grahame searched his stores and found a piece of gaudy cloth. He advanced to the headman and made "Dash!" In return he received three etiolated chickens. Then he "opened palaver."

He traced a canoe in the sands and laid against the drawing a string of beads.

The headman shook his head and grunted, "No fit."

Grahame tempted him with a shining alarm clock.

Still the old man shook his head.

He added a pot of pomatum.

The savage's eyes lit up; but he put the temptation from him.

Grahame understood now that the canoe which Chatteris had speeded ahead had left its instructions. But many hard months of Africans had inculcated him with infinite patience and hope, and as the day was flaming out in a glory of refulgent gold, and the swift-falling curtain of tropical night was already dropping, he made signs that he wanted a hut.

It was granted him instantly.

He retired from the three hundred pairs of curious eyes and retrieved his baggage from three hundred pairs of light-fingered hands that regarded thieving as an accomplishment.

Then he fell into abortive scheming.

A figure stood in the doorway.

"Massa, massa!" it grunted.

"Well?"

"Massa, I speak white-man talk; one time I be Company boy."

"Well?" he asked, disguising the eagerness with which he received this interpreting medium and his instinctive foresense of help.

"You fit, massa, to dash me dem clock and one bag of salt if I go get you canoe and plenty boy?"

"Is that straight goods?"

"I no savvy you, sah?"

"Will you swear by your ju-ju?"

"I be missionary boy, sah; I swear by the Heaven."

He dropped to his knees with upraised hand.

"All right. But, see, I have no salt. But I will get you a bag from the Company's stores at Lokoja."

"Berry well, sah."

"Yes—but look here—no tricks, or—"

Grahame significantly touched his hip pocket where the butt of his revolver showed.

"I no lie, sah; I be missionary boy. I go get him canoe one-time."

"How you going to get away without headman see?"

"Headman no wanta see. Him want dem clock and dem salt, and him wants to say to Company massa: 'My men take canoe when I sleep.'"

"So bow-legs is in this, but wants to plead innocent," commented Grahame as the boy left the hut.

The boy quickly returned with five men. They portered the baggage to a canoe moored ready to the bank. The get-away was accomplished with a sudden show of forms from the huts in pretended pursuit. Grahame went into peals of laughter at the childish play of deception and his triumph over the powerful and great Sokoto Company.

It was a thrilling flight, anyway, between the cañoning walls of forest, under the pyramidal dome of stars, with the packet safe in his shirt and the glorious vistas that opened ahead of him. But his exultation was short-lived. As they swept around a bend in the river they only escaped collision with a smoke-belching launch by the quick work of the stern paddle. The flag of the Royal Sokoto Company hung limply from the

gaff and the pennant of its Agent General dropped from the mast.

A tall, lithe man with a peaked face appeared from the cabin to question the cause of the excitement.

But the canoe swept on, the negroes being as anxious for their salt as Grahame was anxious to avoid a meeting that promised unpleasantness and delay.

An imperious voice called out: "Hi! Bring that canoe alongside. Who are you?"

The ex-company's boy lied:

"Trade canoe, sah, going to Lokoja."

"I can see a white man; why doesn't he answer?"

Grahame answered pertly:

"He is too hurried to answer impertinent questions."

The launch had reversed engines and was fast overhauling the canoe.

The Agent General called back:

"My apologies; I took you for a Company's man. You must be Mr. Grahame?"

Grahame thought quickly. The Agent General had no right to stop him, but then if he ran it would imply that there was something from which he was running.

He stayed his canoemen and brought the craft alongside the launch.

The Agent General leaned over the gunwale and invited ingratiatingly:

"Wont you come aboard and break a bottle with me, Mr. Grahame?"

"Thanks, with pleasure."

Grahame leapt lightly into the bows.

The Agent General drew him into a cabin, where a gargoyle-imp deposited on a small table two pints of Heidseick and two tumblers. Then he fled to the stern to avoid being made the target of flying corks.

The Agent General held his glass aloft.

"Here's boh, Mr. Grahame."

"Boh," responded the American, and satisfactorily quaffed the first touch of civilization in many months.

"Did you find good sport in the Borghu country, Mr. Grahame?"

"Splendid; you couldn't pull a trigger without hitting something."

"Is it a country of much natural wealth?" he asked, seemingly with no

more than polite interest. "It has long been our intention to extend our sphere of influence to embrace Borghu, but always some trouble filled our hands elsewhere. Did you find the country promising in a mining way?"

Grahame met the cool effrontery of the question with frank declaration, "Information of that kind has a certain financial value, sir."

"Very true, Mr. Grahame, very true, and the Company is willing to pay for it. Indeed, if your ambitions ran in other lines than hunting, I think I could find you remunerative work that would satisfy both your lust of adventure and your pocket."

In plain language they would buy him off. He declined the service of the Royal Sokoto Company, but as the Agent General could facilitate his passage to the coast, he was willing to bargain. He offered that if the Company would give him passage to the delta shipping station he would, on his part, gladly furnish any information relative to Borghu in his power.

The Agent General agreed with alacrity:

"I'll take you to Lokoja in the launch, and from thence you may get passage by a stern-wheeler."

"I have promised my men a bag of salt at Lokoja."

"I can pay them off here from the launch's stores."

"But wont it interfere with your arrangements to turn back to Lokoja with me?"

"Not at all, Mr. Grahame. Since you left Mr. Chatteris all right and everything was quiet up there, I have no occasion to continue."

The excuse was so thin that Grahame knew at once that he had been the objective of the Agent General's trip.

Suddenly the latter remembered something. He dived into his pocket and brought forth a letter, which he offered Grahame.

"Here's a piece of mail for you."

"Mail! For me?"

He seized the envelope and ripped open its contents. A short note accompanied a newspaper cutting:



HORACE:

Where are you? Are you safe? Get a wire to me and relieve this suspense. I dare not write more, as this letter's chance of reaching you is so uncertain. Enclose cutting from a society paper. Aren't they mean?

SYBIL.

The cutting showed a picture of a patrician young lady with rather haughty face and blue, English eyes.

Underneath was inscribed:

The Lady Sybil Marston arrived this week at Marston House. She will keep house during the season for her uncle and guardian, the Duke of Arlington, the head of the Royal Sokoto Company. It will be remembered that Lady Sybil's sudden breaking of her engagement to Prince Ferdinand of Spain was the gossip of the summer. Rumor said that a certain young American roused the jealous ire of the Spanish prince by his assiduous attentions to her, and, indeed, a Madrid paper published an account of a supposed fight in the gardens of Seville, which resulted in the prince being *incommodé* for some days. Lady Sybil was hurried home and immured in the Berkshire seat of the Marstons, Greystones Abbey. The American disappeared so effectually as to worry the American ambassador to Spain with fears of foul play.

Grahame reverently folded the note and put it in his pocket, but on second thought he took it out and tore it and the news cutting into fragments and scattered the pieces over the river.

He turned to the Agent General.

"Can I get a wire out of the country?"

"Yes, at Lokoja. The Company will take care of it."

He thought awhile, then asked: "Where is the next telegraph station after Lokoja?"

"At the Gold Coast ports."

"Guess I'll wire from there."

The implication was that he did not care to trust his message to the Company. The caution was not lost on the Agent General, but he made no sign, and gave himself to his duties as host with a fervor calculated to allay Grahame's suspicions. The latter, however, steadily bore in mind the fact that Chateris' canoe had undoubtedly reached the Agent General.

That this was so, he learned the next day.

The Agent General pointed out the striped heads and stiff tails of leopards stalking the high-grassed plain to which the forest had given place, and suggested a hunt.

Grahame accepted the suggestion enthusiastically. They took the crew of the launch for bearers, leaving behind only the cook's-mate. Grahame shot two leopards to the Englishman's three. The negroes skinned the pelts on the field, then all returned with the trophies.

Directly Grahame entered the small cabin he saw, with a sudden flush of rage, that the old trick of searching his baggage had again been played on him and that the job had been done thoroughly.

The Agent General saw it, too, with a start of surprise. He made a great show of hunting for the cook's-mate, and was most abject in his apologies.

Grahame cut into them rudely; he was considerably upset:

"Don't apologize, sir; I can sympathize with your feelings," sarcastically. "And there is no harm done. I carry my packet on my person."

"Packet, Mr. Grahame?"

"Yes; this." He dived into his shirt and brought out the goat-skin package.

"He was not a wise youth, or he would have taken something from my stuff to make a show of robbery."

"What! Do you mean to say—"

"Aw! Don't let's talk about it; it is too unpleasant a subject."

Nor would he touch the topic again. A coolness marked the rest of the passage to Lokoja. There Grahame thankfully transferred himself to a palsied stern-wheeler that was loading kernels for the delta depot.

At the moment of sailing a chubby, pink-and-white youth came aboard with his negro and baggage. He apologized for the intrusion:

"You don't mind my sharing your accommodations, Mr. Grahame?"

"No, indeed; I haven't preëmpted the steamer. I shall be glad of your company."

"Thank you. My name is Swinnerton —Arthur Swinnerton. I am going home



—fancy, home to the clatter of streets, and white women, and church bells. I'm crazy over it."

Grahame accepted the ingenuous youth without question, finding a fund of interest in his undecorated stories of Palm-Oil-Ruffianism and grewsome anecdotes of the lonely trading stations.

At Gana Gana they stayed to wood and partake of the whiskey-hospitality of its Agent, an emaciated man with the dreaming eyes of one used to solitude and with the fevered cheeks of the poisonous jungle vapors.

Grahame was strictly a moderate man in his drinking and when he felt an unusual heaviness after but a couple of drinks, he suspected that his liquor had been doctored. Yet it might be a touch of fever. Anyway, he would not quarrel, but, rising quietly, with the excuse that he was not well, and unheeding the protests of his host and the youth, he returned to his steamer cabin and turned in.

He was awakened by the throbbing of the engines. His head was still a little heavy, but his suspicions were wide awake.

His first thought was for his packet. He put his hand under his pillow.

It was gone.

For a second his heart seemed to stop beating.

Then he ran through his clothes, thinking that he might have forgotten to take it from his shirt in his unnatural drowsiness.

But it was not there.

He stood erect a moment, a strange light in his eyes, recalling all that he had adventured for it and the future happiness dependent on it.

Suddenly rage swept him. He dashed from the cabin, and came on the youth carelessly using an old carbine at the big targets offered by a herd of sportive hippopotamuses.

He snatched the gun from his hands.

The boy shrank back against the smoke-stack, his face whitening before the other's grim intent.

Grahame spoke with serious calm:

"Kid, I want that packet."

Swinnerton recovered his courage.

"You wont get it from me."

"You dirty little thief! And I took you for a gentleman."

"Thief yourself. You stole the papers," the boy flashed.

"Steady, kid; thief is an ugly word that does not go down with me. What do you mean by saying that I stole papers?"

"That packet contained political papers belonging to the Company."

"So that is the gag they put on you."

Grahame was relieved, for he had liked the boy.

"Kid, they have played as dirty a trick on you as they have on me; they have no right whatever to that packet. Now will you give it up? You've got to, you know, sooner or later."

Grahame's words conveyed straight menace and truth. The boy flushed with the shame of it, as he hoarsely whispered:

"They told me you had stolen them."

They promised me a home trip and to annul my three years' contract. I was homesick—crazy to go home."

"All right, kid. I'm not blaming you. There's my hand on it. Now that packet."

"I have not got it," he breathed. "It's on its way to Lokoja by the Gana Gana canoe."

Grahame bounded to the bridge and ordered the dull-faced Nubian captain to about-ship.

The negro said he took his orders from the Agent General and no one else.

"By Heavens! You shall take orders from me, or I'll blow your brains out."

Grahame blustered the man into obedience.

He went down into the engine-room to see that no tricks were played for a breakdown. He stayed by the engines, urged on the naked, sweating giants of stokers and drove them to their limit with the terror inspired by his carbine. The boat throbbed in its every rib and bolt. It seemed as if she must part seams under the strain.

They passed off Gana Gana, unheeding the frantic signals of a white figure against a huge iron shed. Every few moments Grahame ran into the bows and searched the river.

Suddenly a four-paddle canoe was sighted. Grahame blew a tiny blast on the siren. The canoemen replied by turn-

ing round and paddling innocently down to the steamer. It was evident that the Agent at Gana Gana had not instructed them on the possibility of pursuit. They surrendered the packet without protest. Grahame left them in the stream.

The rest of the voyage to the delta was unmarked by incident. The youth was poor company after the exposure.

Grahame tried to comfort him:

"Don't be glum, kid; you get your home trip."

"Yes, but after?"

"A likely chap like you can do better than the Sokoto Company. If your fancy turns Americaward, look me up. There's my card. It is a big name in the railroad world."

Swinnerton recovered his buoyancy; thereafter his stories of the Oil Rivers and his light tenor voice in snatches of Verdi and Puccini enlivened the voyage up the bleached white of the Gold Coast to the Grand Canaries, where Grahame sent a cable to London.

THE LADY SYBIL MARSTON,  
BELGRAVIA:  
Sail New York Saturday.  
HORACE.

Thence his face wore an anticipating smile, which neither the gales of the Bay of Biscay nor the Channel fogs could dissipate.

Saying good-by at the depot to the youth, he hailed a hansom and drove across the city to the palaces of Belgravia, to a big mansion that boasted the quarterings of a ducal house.

A liveried footman took his card and quickly returned to usher him to a boudoir.

A very patrician young lady with blue, English eyes, sprang to her feet with outstretched hands.

"Horace!"

"Well, girl, did you think the cannibals had me?"

For a few tense moments their eyes held their souls. Then the girl recovered her dignity.

"Horace, how dare you send me that wire?"

"What's the matter?" with innocent impudence.

"I am not going with you to New York on Saturday. I make my own dates, sirrah."

"Oh, yes, you are," confidently. "We sail by the *St. Paul*. All kinds of business is hung up for me."

"Go to with your old business; I'm not coming." She tossed her head.

For answer he laughed.

She capitulated.

"Boy," she breathed, "the duke will never, never consent."

"Oh yes, he will; I've got something that'll force it out of him. Would he be at the Sokoto Company offices now?"

She looked to a Louis Quatorze clock on the marble mantel.

"Yes. There was a meeting of the directorate to-day; there's some big scheme afloat. You would catch him if you hurried."

"Put on your hat and come," he ordered, with wholesome disregard of the niceties of an aristocratic ménage.

For a second she hesitated, resenting his authoritativeness. Suddenly she giggled irrepressibly and slipped away, to return quickly, plumed and cloaked in exquisite daintiness. She gave his arm the tips of her fingers as they went down to the waiting hansom.

"The Royal Sokoto Company, Thames Embankment," he called to the cabby.

"This," he whispered as he nestled beside her, "is worth all the months of pitiless sun and weary marches and treacherous natives. I used to dream of this when I ate the messes of the Emir of Borghu and paid servile homage to a barbarian. My, but the duke will be a chagrined man when I place my packet before him. Here is the place."

The cab drew up before an edifice befitting a company that was a government in itself.

"Are you coming up?"

"N-no." She drew back into the cab.

"You fight it out."

"All right, little coward. But you will wait? Promise."

"I promise, Mr. American Boss."

He laughed again as he leapt from the cab and bounded up the steps, laughed out of the ringing joy of his heart.

A clerk took his card in to the great man and returned with the serious face which the London clerk adopts as his badge of responsibility.

"His Grace will see you, sir."

He showed Grahame into a sumptuous office.

A benevolent-looking, heavily whiskered man of middle age sat at a flat-topped desk. He greeted Grahame with grim recognition:

"So you are back, young man. I have heard of you from our African end. Be seated, please. So you have been hunting in the Borghu district. Had you a successful shoot?"

"Very, sir; I bagged this."

He laid the packet on the desk. "And incidentally I captured a wife."

"A wife! Indeed, I am very glad to hear it. I was afraid at one time that you were going to be stubborn over the Lady Sybil."

"Ah, but it is the Lady Sybil."

"Mr. Grahame, you jest unseemly."

"Never more in earnest in my life, sir."

The duke was a little astonished at the American's confident manner. He frowned. Then leaned forward seriously.

"It cannot be, Mr. Grahame. Why do you persist in this foolishness? I recognize your personal merits; I know your reputation on the other side as an astute man of affairs, and, as for yourself, I like you. But both my ward and myself have certain obligations to our family. Besides, I do not believe in people marrying out of their class."

Grahame was very cool, even smiling.

"As an American citizen and a gentleman I hold my class inferior to none. But that is as may be. Once I came to you honestly as a suitor to the Lady Sybil. You turned me down, rather ungently, I must say. Now I approach you on a different footing. Will you please look at this document?"

He unwrapped the goat-skin cover, drew forth a parchment, and began:

"This is a properly witnessed and executed agreement between the Emir of Borghu and one Horace Grahame, whereby said Emir of Borghu concedes to said Horace Grahame the sole rights of exploitation of the mineral, vegetable,

and other wealth of Borghu in consideration of the annual payment of two hundred bags of salt."

The duke was tracing the clauses with shaking finger. A directors' meeting had a short while ago discussed the serious falling off in the volume of trade from the Niger, and the alarming report of the Agent General as to the practical exhaustion of the rubber and palm kernel trade. A conclusion had been reached to push the domains of the Company up into the rich Borghu district. This piece of paper would put the Company into the bankruptcy court. But his grace was a diplomat; he showed none of the fear of his heart in his face.

Instead he bluffed:

"That agreement, Mr. Grahame, is not worth the paper it is written on."

"No-o?" drawled Grahame.

"No! The Emir of Borghu is tributary to the King of Bida, with whom we have prior treaties covering this ground."

"So-o? Yet I could get big financial backing."

The duke rose to his feet and excitedly paced the rich Axminster. Suddenly he halted before Grahame and withdrew his bluff:

"Allowing for argument's sake, your title to this concession, why do you flaunt it here?"

"I'm holding you up."

"So I suppose. Your price?"

"The Lady Sybil."

"Nonsense."

"Very good; then I organize the Royal Borghu Company."

Grahame rose and bowed.

"Oh, go along with you," the duke testily exclaimed. "It seems I am too much in the last century to be the guardian of a young lady."

Grahame received the ungracious assent with boisterous humor, dashing away with the verdict to the blue, English eyes, anxiously awaiting it. He vaulted into the cab and caught her hand:

"Mine, mine, mine! To my eyrie over the pond. Drive on, cabby. What's the matter with you?"

"What, where to?"

"The dome of St. Paul's—anywhere for a couple of hours."

# A Disrupted Eden

by Elia W Peattie  
Illustrations by Horace Taylor



MR. BILLY APPELEYARD was a true believer. He believed in many things, but above all, perhaps, in his wife, in the Reneke Implement Company—for which he traveled—and in his flat. Some men would have experienced difficulty in unloading upon a mere flat all those sacred sentiments which are supposed to be reserved for old homesteads, but Mr. Appleyard's capacity for sentiment enabled him to ride lightly over difficulties which to other men might have appeared insurmountable. No doubt the training, incident upon mounting three flights of stairs each time he ascended to his own doorstep, acclimated him to high altitudes of feeling as well as of physical elevation.

Carping and cautious critics may object to the conjunction of "Billy" with "Mr.," in the name of the troubled protagonist of this tale, on the same principle that they would to a costume beginning with a top hat and concluding with tan shoes. It only can be urged that thus was Mr. Billy Appleyard known. Kara, the young Swedish lady who condescended to the Appleyards from their kitchen, referred to him under that name when she criticised him to Eric Erickson, the gentleman-janitor. Frank, the postman, called him that, meaning no disrespect. Billy's comrades, on the road—the illimitable genial company of commercial travelers—dubbed him that in affectionate satire. The name simply happened, just as a nose might. And Billy

accepted it in the same spirit that he did his nose—which was, truth to tell, a good nose in a comely face. His brothers of the road

often had envied him his guileless and friendly countenance. Moreover, they had envied him his pretty and devoted wife, and his position with that excellent establishment, the Reneke Implement Company; and such of them as had seen his flat, envied him that, too.

The heart of Mr. Billy Appleyard was particularly light as he turned in at the veneered marble entrance of the Costa Rica apartments one chilly April evening. He had, unexpectedly, been able to conclude a sale in the next county, and had returned full twenty-four hours before the expected time, to revel in the glow cast from his own gas grate upon his treasured hearthstone. His heart beat pleasantly as he turned the key in his door and let himself within the hall, where the much-admired hat-rack and carefully dusted hall-chest stood side by side, in the same friendly intercourse they had previously enjoyed at Brown's easy payment furniture emporium.

Everything justified his highest expectation. The reading lamp—a premium secured with the daily journal which was as light to their footsteps—glowed upon the table. His own Edith, neat as a pin and spry as a canary, was



making her way to her lonely meal, properly depressed at his absence. At the unexpected sight of him she broke into dimples and a swift blush of surprise.

"Oh, Billy, what luck that I have steak instead of chops! If there had been chops there would have been only two. And a chop apiece wouldn't have done—not for you. At least, I mean—well, anyway, it's steak. And salad. And floating island. Take off your things, quick. I've been lonelier than ever. Yes, I went to the matinee, but I was dull just the same. And to church, yes. But what's the use without you? Mamie Boffin gave a luncheon, with bridge afterwards. And I wore my new green silk—it's too cunning, Billy, the green silk. But you! How lovely to have you!"

They quite exulted in the dinner. Billy said she mixed the best salad-dressing in the world. She laughed at all of his jokes. Once in a while they clasped hands as if they were on their honeymoon. And when they left the table and made their way to the living room, Edith demanded, as was her custom:

"Now really, Billy, did you ever see such a pretty room as this?"

Billy took in the familiar apartment with a loving glance.

"There's nothing like it out in Dexter County," said he.

They kept up the tradition that wherever he went he searched in vain for a home to compare with his own.

"I do hope," said Edith, getting out her wools and needles after she had seen that his cigar was lighted and his ash-receiver at his elbow, "that we'll be left in peace to-night. I hope no one will so much as ring the telephone. I wouldn't care, Billy, if we were on a desert island."

"But you couldn't have the flat on a desert island," warned Billy.

"True for you," agreed Edith.

Conversation ceased. Not because they were bored—quite the contrary. She knitted with her long, wooden needles, and her engagement diamond sparkled before Billy's half-closed eyes. He smoked and dreamed, and a sweet five minutes placidly strung itself "on the stretched forefinger of all time."

Then the impish-looking telephone, black as the pit, spat out an interruption.

"Oh, sugar!" cried Edith.

"Bust it!" said Billy—or words to that effect.

"I'm afraid it's the Boffins," sighed Edith, as she took up the receiver. "They were talking about bridge for to-night."

"But you wont go, Edie! I wouldn't move out of this house for a ten-dollar bill. And you wont leave me—my first night home?"

Edith shook her head violently, and then entered upon her telephonic conversation.

"Who? Oh, yes—yes, Mamie, it's me. What? Bridge? Well, you see—"

"Tell 'em you expect me home at nine o'clock and can't leave," whispered Billy at her shoulder.

"Yes, I know, Mamie," Edith stammered on at the telephone. "But, see here—listen—can't you get some one else in? You see, I—that is, I expect Billy home to-night on the nine o'clock train. The girl's gone out, and there wouldn't be a soul to meet him. And he's lost his latch-key. I can't come, really—so sorry."

Billy had resumed his comfortable attitude and was regarding his slippers with satisfaction. They were red Romeo slippers, given him at Christmas by his Edie. The difficulty, he imagined, was as good as over. He wriggled his toes in the roomy Romeos, and felicitated himself.

But Edith had not yet made her escape. She was still talking.

"What? Your mother? Oh, my! no, I couldn't think of allowing—yes, I know how kind she is. So good-natured of her to offer to come over and wait for him, but really, you know—Hold on, Mamie! Mamie, I say! Here, Central, you're shutting us off!"

Billy sat up in alarm.

"For goodness' sake, what is it, Edie?"

"Well, Mamie Boffin is a determined piece! A perfect little donkey!"

"Well?"

"She's sending her mother, Mrs. Bishop, and her sister Clara over here to sit. She said they'd just as soon sit here as at home—rather, in fact, because it would be quieter, and they want to read."

"Jumping Moses, Edie! They'll come



"Tell 'em you expect me home at nine o'clock"



and find I'm here, and what'll they think, then?"

"You mustn't be here, that's all. Put on your things, Billy, and run somewhere, I wish we had friends in some of the other flats. Can't you go to the drug-store? I've noticed men sitting around in there."

"Drug-store? What kind of a corner loafer do you take me for?"

"Well, you've got to go somewhere! My gracious, there, they are whistling at the tube now. I should think they must have run! They'll be upstairs in a minute. Get out, dear, do, please—please. They mustn't hear us talking, you know."

Admirable as the flat was, it was unprovided with sliding panels or secret chambers, and Billy, in flying, had no choice but to take to the rear of the elongated series of perfectly obvious rooms. The dining-room seemed too contiguous,

and he went into the kitchen, annoyed for the first time by the lack of imagination on the part of the architect, and hoping that his reliable Edith could, by hook or crook, arrange things after all. But Edith, having launched her one pale, pink lie, was at the end of her powers of conspiracy. Her high treble ceased, after a time, to make itself heard, and Billy realized, with a sinking of the heart, that she had been compelled, in the interest of consistency, to go to the Boffin's.

The drab voice of Mrs. Boffin's mother, reading "The Sorrows of Satan" presently disturbed the calm. Billy longed to read, too, and cautiously turned up the light with that intention; but Kara, the young Swedish lady, had left behind her no visible evidences of that bored culture and superior breeding which the hauteur of her manner habitually conveyed, and Billy could find nothing more than a

half-burned pink sporting sheet, which had been used as a flat iron stand. He seated himself in the patent rocker which Edith had provided for her handmaiden's comfort, and, for lack of better occupation, drew his memorandum book from his pocket, and was almost contentedly engaged in deciphering its contents when he heard a suspicious movement in the dining-room.

"It's darker than ours," he heard Mrs. Bishop saying in her heavy monotone. "That's owing partly to these panel-effects in slate color. And no pictures! Mrs. Appleyard may have taste in dress, but when it comes to house decoration she's too queer for me. She doesn't take any too good care of her silver, does she? You can see the tarnish on it half way across the room. I don't care for that grape design in silver anyway. It's too common. I suppose it was a wedding present, though, and not her own choosing."

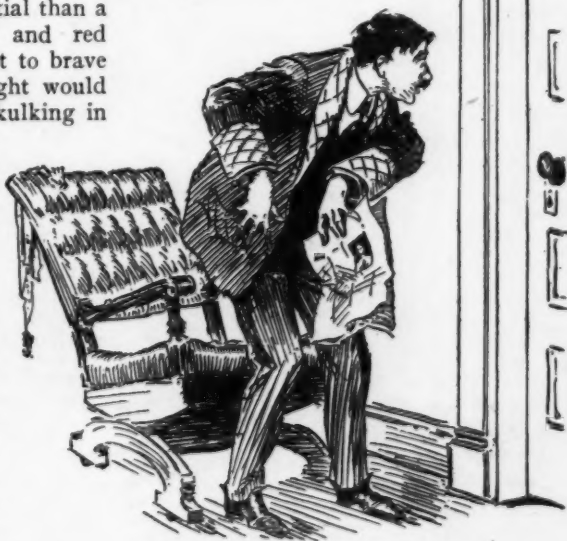
The voice boomed nearer. It seemed to be at the key-hole! In another three seconds it would be at his ear.

The next second Mr. Billy Appleyard, who had wronged no man, saw himself a palpitating fugitive. He snapped off the light and made for the rear door. Though he had noticed that the rain had begun to fall, and though he was hatless and had nothing more substantial than a smoking-jacket to his back and red Romeo slippers to his feet, yet to brave the elements of the sullen night would be better than to be caught skulking in his own house, he thought. Those Boffins and Bishops had sharp and wagging tongues, and he had no mind to be the butt of their relentless story-telling habits.

He heard the women enter the pantry that mercifully intervened between the dining-room and kitchen, and convulsively he seized the knob of the outside door. It turned with a click, but the door remained fast. It was locked. And the key was gone. Kara was out and had taken it with her.

He was driven to bay, and he conceived the idea for the fragment of a moment of setting up an awful yell and scaring the women away. Then he thought of acting the part of a sneak-thief and crouching in the corner. That surely would have the effect of driving them from his preserves. Yet they might call up the police! You never could tell when a woman would develop disconcerting bravery. No, flight seemed best. There was one more chance of escape—Kara's room. Desperately he opened the door leading to the chamber of this proud daughter of the North, and closed it silently behind him. But he had no time for so much as a breath of relief. The enemy was already in the kitchen.

"That girl they have is an awful runabout," he could hear Mrs. Bishop saying. "Look there, will you? She's been in such a hurry to get out that she hasn't even washed the dishes. She's stacked 'em up to do in the morning. I never had anything of that sort going on in my house, and I can tell you it never would have happened a second time. These housekeepers nowadays are too soft-hearted for words. Look at that easy chair, will you? And the sloven hasn't so much as put food in the re-



The voice seemed to be at the keyhole

frigerator. Here she's left this chocolate pudding standing out where the mice can get at it—if there are mice. And there are sure to be, for that sort of thing brings 'em. The pudding looks as if it was made after that recipe Bess gave Mrs. Appleyard. I'll just taste it to see, I believe. Here, Clara, have a bit. Too sweet, isn't it? Wipe off the spoon again, will you? They've only one pantry I guess. That's the girl's room there, I suppose—"

The door was flung open, and Mr. Billy Appleyard, lying flat beneath the bed with his face pressed into the dusty corner, was praying that he might not sneeze.

The rustling garments of the redoubtable Mrs. Bishop drew closer. It seemed as if she could not fail to hear his struggling breath. He felt the springs of the low bed being violently poked by her inquisitive hand as she prodded the mattress.

"It's not hair, for a wonder," she said. "But it's a good mattress for all that—stuffed with cotton, I suppose. The girl's room looks better than her kitchen. That's a pretty rug before the dresser—but I'll warrant

there's a hole under it. You'll find the carpet worn out before the looking glass every time when you go to a hired girl's bedroom."

She seemed to be pausing before the dresser, and Billy could hear her handling Kara's beads and trinkets. Would she ever go? The dust beneath the bed was tickling his nostrils horribly. He did everything that ever he had heard of to strangle the sneeze in its incipency, but he felt it horribly getting the better of him.

"I'm done for," he thought as an internal explosion rent him; but at that moment Mrs. Bishop slammed the door behind her and Billy lay panting and thankful in the darkened seclusion of the chamber.

He wanted Edith—very much wanted Edith. It was shabby of her to have gotten him into this predicament. Why had she told that inane lie? Oh, yes, come to think of it, because he told her to. But after all, she should have resisted.

Of what use was woman's superior moral nature if it toppled over like that at the first attack? And to think she had left him at the mercy of those prying cats! Really, it was too much. Mr. Billy Appleyard had his own ideas of dignity,



"I've never had anything of that sort going on in my house"



He felt the springs being violently poked

and they were sorely affronted as he rolled slowly over and over toward a world of wider dimensions than that in which he had made himself small during the past anxious ten minutes.

What happened next remained confused in his mind; he never could be quite sure of the sequence of events.

Whether he really heard the key turn in the outer door, or whether the first he knew was Kara's coming into her bedroom to lay off her coat; or whether he saw her or Eric the janitor first, or whether he cried out or was silent, or whether he was really on his feet when Eric seized him, or whether the Swede hauled him from under the bed, or whether he tried to hit back when the janitor shook him like a terrier, or whether—well, anyway, presently he was sitting on the second landing from the top of the outside rear stairs, with a skinned elbow, a scraped thigh, two aggressive protuberances on his head and only one red Romeo slipper.

The rain beat upon him and helped

to dissipate his giddiness. A long, wet, silent time seemed to pass, during which nothing happened. Then he aroused himself to a realization that his garments were becoming drenched, that his unclad foot rested in a chilly puddle, and that he had been cast with a sort of unquestioned finality from his own hitherto congenial flat. And, no doubt, the raging Swedish Viking was fast upon him.

Too dazed to crawl away, he sat shivering before his oncoming fate, which, however, some unexpected circumstance evidently postponed.

Presently he heard the voices of Kara and Eric engaged in an altercation.

"I tell you I know dat red shoe, Eric. Dat's Mr. Billy Appleyard's shoe. Ah know dese travelin' men, w'at dere lak—an' me a respectable Swedish gahl, goin' to communion las' Sunda, an' him takin' my character from me lak dat. An' th' missus, wan she be huffy? Ah git anoder place right away. The missus, she'll be jealous of me, Ah tank."

But Eric the Viking, was demanding



further satisfaction of her. He complimented her by his noisy lover's suspicions. He roared that she was putting him off the scent—that she had an understanding with Mr. Billy Appleyard.

Billy actually cringed when he heard the contemptuous manner in which the janitor spoke his name. Did all those terrible blond people below stairs, or behind cupboards—for in a flat the help hardly could be said to be below stairs—think and speak of him thus? Why had he incurred their disapproval? He heard a hysterical voice raised in refutation of Eric's charges, and then summoned the fortitude to creep on down the stairs. There were three flights, with three landings to each flight, and when he was not encountering a waste-basket he was debouching from an ice-cream freezer, or colliding with a clothes-rack.

A deluge of rain greeted him as he stepped from under the comparative shelter of the stairway. He peered about him through the downpour and the darkness, with the air of one who was visiting the neighborhood for the first time. Indeed, he seldom had been in the rear of the building. His sentiment had been an airy thing which mounted on swift wing to his own particular apartment—that sacred retreat, now profanely invaded by the Goths and Visigoths. Some such feeling as that which overtakes the incognito prince swelled within him. A ball of lead grew up in his throat. Little flames seemed to shoot through his eyes. These sensations reminded him of the time, many, many years ago when a big boy had thrashed him—and he, only a little fellow, going to school the first day. He had entered upon his scholastic career in the primiest of navy-blue suits, with a spotless Eton collar. He returned home with a draggled coat, no collar, and a bloody nose. And he had felt as he did now, with the single difference that on the previous occasion he had howled. Now he merely wanted to.

It was out of the question for a gentleman of his standing in the neighborhood to appear beneath gaslight in his present condition. To venture to return to his home was out of the question. The

invaders guarded both front and rear, and whether the Viking's fists or the lady's sardonic tongue would inflict the greater violence upon his lacerated feelings he did not even attempt to decide. At all events, modest retirement seemed to be his rôle. But where was he to retire? And how many hours would elapse before Edith's return?

Never had he desired her more intensely—whether to berate her, or to revel in her pity, he could not have told. An almost intolerable desire to take it out of somebody swelled within him. In such moments of exasperation a man, he reflected, is entitled to the background of his hearth. He longed to thunder forth maledictions in the privacy of his domestic chamber. He ached to wring tears from Edith's eyes. For such exigencies, indeed, were wives devised.

It could not, he concluded, be more than nine o'clock, and Edith hardly could be expected before half-after ten. What a plight! His stockinged foot was chilled and soaking; the bumps on his head were rising like biscuits; and the lump in his throat was growing larger. He groped toward a coal-shed with a feeling of overwhelming self-pity. He could, at least, find a fugitive's shelter there. He opened the door and was about to step in when something launched itself at him with that ardor of attack which only a really conscientious watchdog can achieve—a silent, formidable watchdog, who had not thought it worth while to bark.

By an improbable piece of good fortune Billy was able to make a calculation as to the identity of the dog.

"Here Lucy, Lucy," he gasped, "you know me, eh? Nice doggie—nice doggie."

Nice doggie already had worked ruin with his spring trousers.

"Good enough for me," he reflected as he heard the rent in the garments which had, a few hours before, filled him with innocent pride. "I had no business to buy a spring suit this year. It's a punishment for my extravagance."

Lucy, at the sound of a familiar voice, relaxed her grip and indulged in some apologetic remarks. Billy actually felt a



sort of comfort as her tail flicked his leg in the vigor of her attempts to wipe out her mistake. He discovered a sort of box, up against the wall, and seated himself on it desolately with the dog at his feet. The rain beat a continuous tattoo on the roof, and concealed from the dog the fact the man was sniveling gently. Little by little the world and its woes grew dimmer—blurred into a general

He was in no condition to undergo the cold scrutiny of the constabulary eyes, and had no choice but to slink back again into the shadow.

However, some kind monitor within impelled him to cast his eyes upward. Above him hung the fire-escape, the lowest landing of which was not more than a dozen feet from the ground. He exulted like Alexander discovering the



What happened next remained confused in his mind

disagreeable grayness—and became nothing. Billy and Lucy snored together amid the grime.

He awoke, thinking that he had had a bad dream; but realization soon stung him into activity. Opening the door of the shed, he poked out his nose with the caution of a hunted cat. No one was in sight. The whole rear of the apartment house was dark—save only his own kitchen. Was the Visigoth still there? At any rate, the Goths in the parlor must have gone. He would get around to the speaking tube and communicate with Edith. In pursuance of this intention he crept around to the front of the house only to find the doorway blocked by the substantial form of a strange policeman.

secret path to Mola. Limping back to the coal shed, and safe-guarding himself with many precautionary pleasantries to the conscientious Lucy, he secured a step-ladder. This he balanced against the wall and mounted to the very top. For one appalling moment it swayed under his weight and he almost gave himself up for lost. With the daring of despair, however, he leaped a few inches into the air, caught the fire-escape with his right hand and, with a keen wrenching of the joints, swung himself—thanks to gymnastic activities in other days—up on the iron platform.

It was after that a simple matter to mount to the fourth story. True the stairs were slippery with rain, so that it seemed

the part of caution to crawl up on all fours, but the time had passed when a detail of that sort could annoy him. He suffered, however, from an acute anxiety. The ladder related itself to his apartment by way of the pantry window—which ought to be locked. More than once had he chidden Kara for her failure to fasten it. But now he prayed that her customary negligence might not have deserted her. This supplication was answered—the window lifted easily enough to suit any predatory investigator. He lifted it sufficiently to admit his trembling form and crept within. Unfortunately he chanced to hit the tin grater, which hit the colander, which hit the double-boiler, which hit the toasting-fork, which hit the bread-knife, which hit the bread-spoon, which hit the spider, which hit the dish-pan, which hit the toast-rack. Some of them clashed together where they swung on their nails; some clattered on the floor.

The door was flung open and the white face of Edith looked in.

"Billy!" she cried, with a sort of whispered shriek.

"Edith! Have they gone?"

"Oh, they've gone," she answered, half laughing and half sobbing as she dragged him into the light.

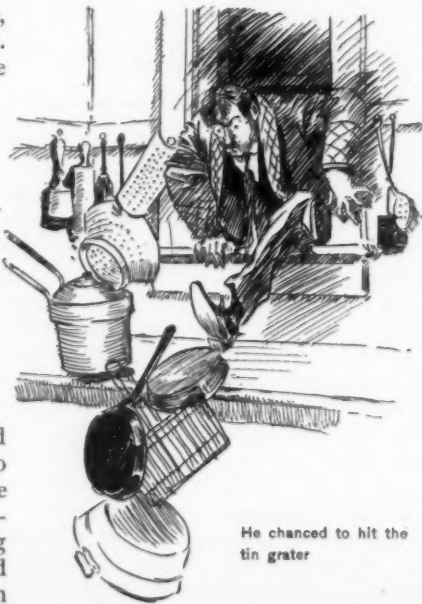
"Everything's gone, Billy—even honor. Kara dashed into the front room with the slipper you lost in the struggle, and Mrs. Bishop recognized it because I had shown it to her before I gave it to you Christmas, and she and Clara rushed home splitting with laughter and broke up the bridge party. And then I ran home, and Kara was waiting to give notice—and worse than that, she isn't going away. She's going to marry Eric and move into his rooms in

the basement. So we'll never hear the last of the thing. We've got to leave the flat, Billy. We've been cast out of Eden just like Adam and Eve. And it all came of lying."

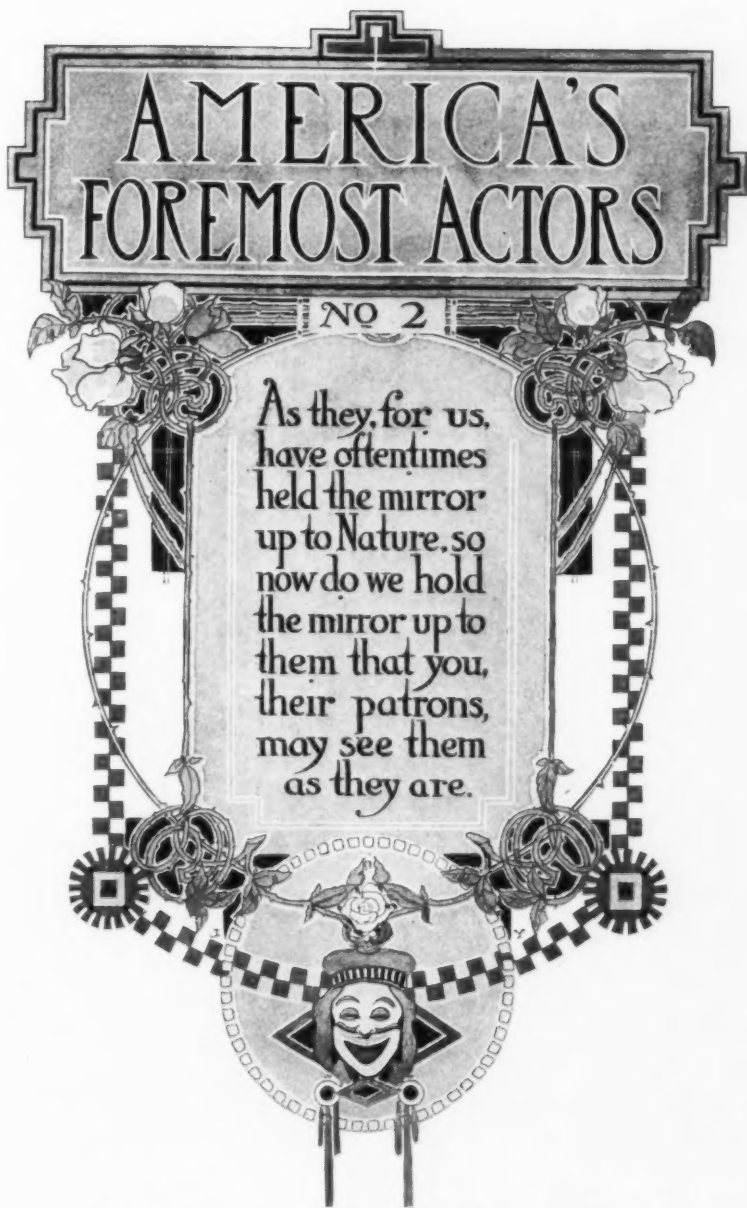
She gave a little shout of laughter, which broke into a sympathetic groan as she discovered her husband's bruises.

"The only real difference is, that it was you, the man, who tempted me, the woman—and I did fib! I'm so glad it happened that way, for once. It almost comforts me for moving out of the flat. Sit perfectly still, dear, while I get the arnica. Poor dear! Poor dear! Anyway, the lease is up next month. And, Billy, what would you think of moving into a detached cottage in a suburb? If I had a garden I wouldn't be so lonely while you are away. I could fuss around with hardy annuals and things. Come, Billy, please! It's all over with us in this neighborhood. They'd have the giggles whenever I stuck my head in a door. No more bridge parties or luncheons for little Edie! Besides, I wouldn't be at the mercy of the Swede bride and groom for a whole apartment house with the deed made out to me. For goodness sake, Billy, you certainly are a ruin! And your trousers are torn, too. Why don't you speak

up and tell me all that happened? Begin at the very beginning and go on straight through it all to the miserable end. Don't you think I have any human curiosity at all? Talk, man, talk! But—before you begin—I got the prize at bridge to-night—you can't think what! A cunning little iron lantern, just the very thing to hang on the porch of our new cottage, Mr. Billy Apple-  
yard!"



He chanced to hit the tin grater



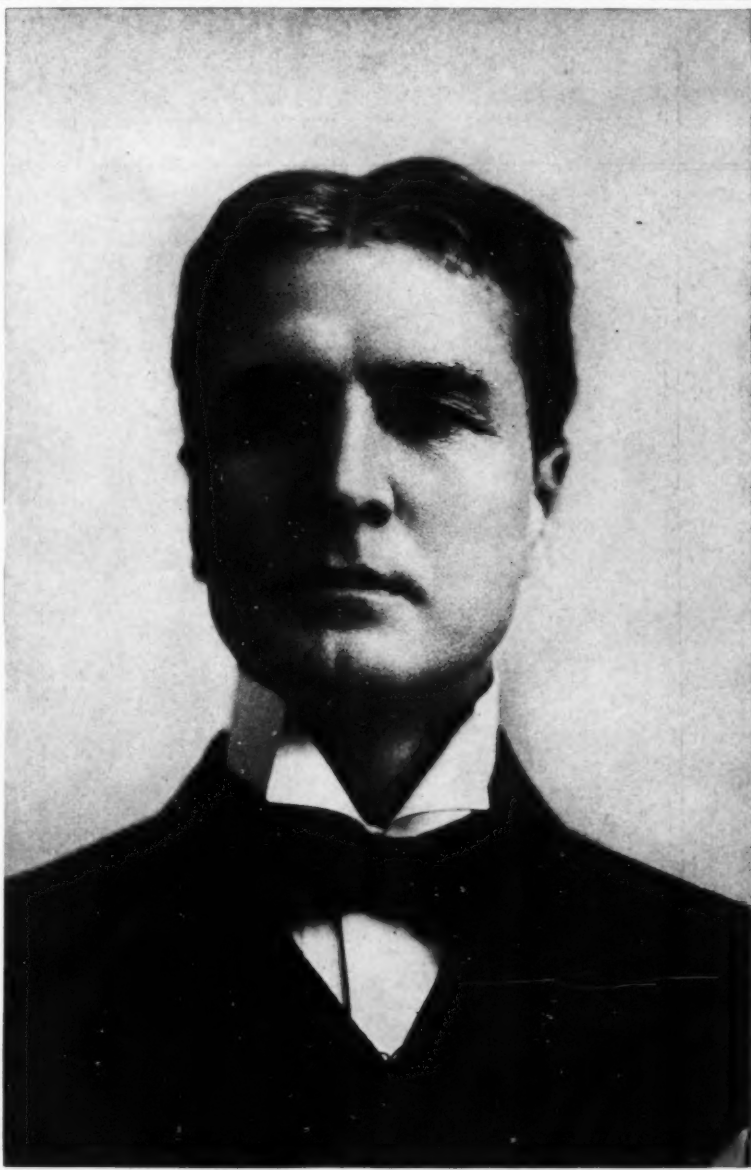
This is the second series of fifteen portraits of the thirty foremost actors identified with the American Stage. The first series of portraits was published in THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE for August.



**WILLIAM COLLIER**

Mr. Collier was born in 1868 and ten years later ran away to join a juvenile "Pinafore" company, with which he played, ultimately, every part. In 1882 he became a call boy at Augustin Daly's theatre, later playing small parts. In 1889 he joined John Russell's "City Directory" company. A long period during which he played eccentric parts in Hoyt farces followed, and in 1901 he became a star in "The Man From Mexico." He was later seen in "Mr. Smooth" and "On the Quiet." The latter piece he produced successfully in London and in 1906 toured Australia with his own company. In 1907-8 he was seen in "Caught In The Rain" and last season in "A Lucky Star," which he will carry on tour during the coming winter.

Photograph by Saronv, New York



**WILLIAM GILLETTE**

Hartford, Conn., was his birthplace—1853 the year. A son of United States Senator Francis Gillette, his first professional experience was made at the age of 20 with the Ben De Bar Stock Company, opening in New Orleans. Later Mark Twain obtained an engagement for him at the Globe Theatre, Boston. That was in 1875. Later he appeared with John T. Raymond and with the Macauley Stock, of Louisville. His first great success was in "The Professor," self-made, which ran a year in New York, and was followed by "The Private Secretary." In 1895, "Secret Service" was produced with himself in the leading role, as was the case of "Sherlock Holmes" later. Recently he has appeared in "Clarice."

Photograph by Sarony, New York

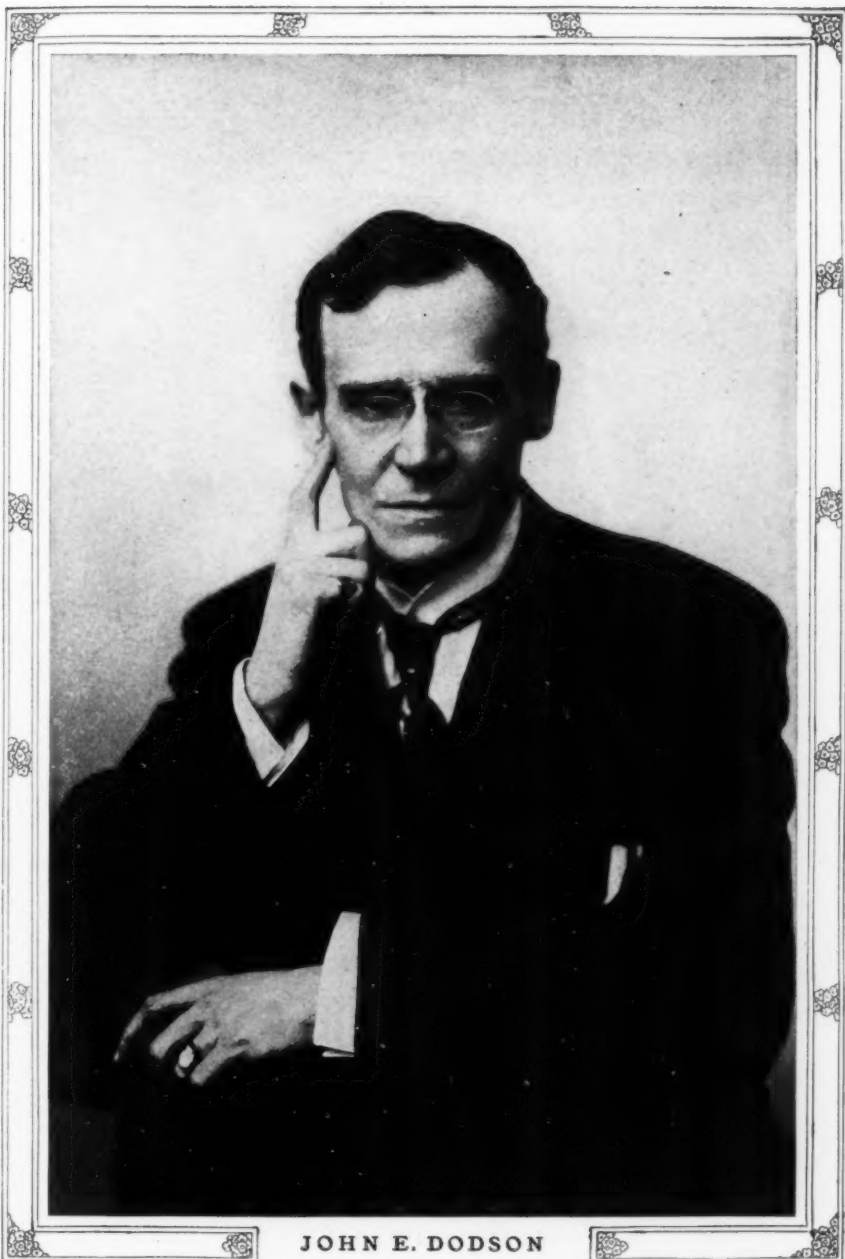




**WILLIAM ALFRED FAVERSHAM**

Mr. Faversham was born in London, in 1868. In 1887, shortly after his first appearance on the English stage, he came to America in the support of Helen Hastings. Later he joined Daniel Frohman's Lyceum Company. The next year he returned to England, and after a period of rest came again to America and joined the Empire Company, with which he appeared in all its plays for four years. In 1902 Mr. Faversham married Miss Julie Opp, with whom he has jointly starred since. Two seasons ago he met with great success in "The Squaw Man," and last season appeared in an elaborate production of Stephen Phillips' "Herod."

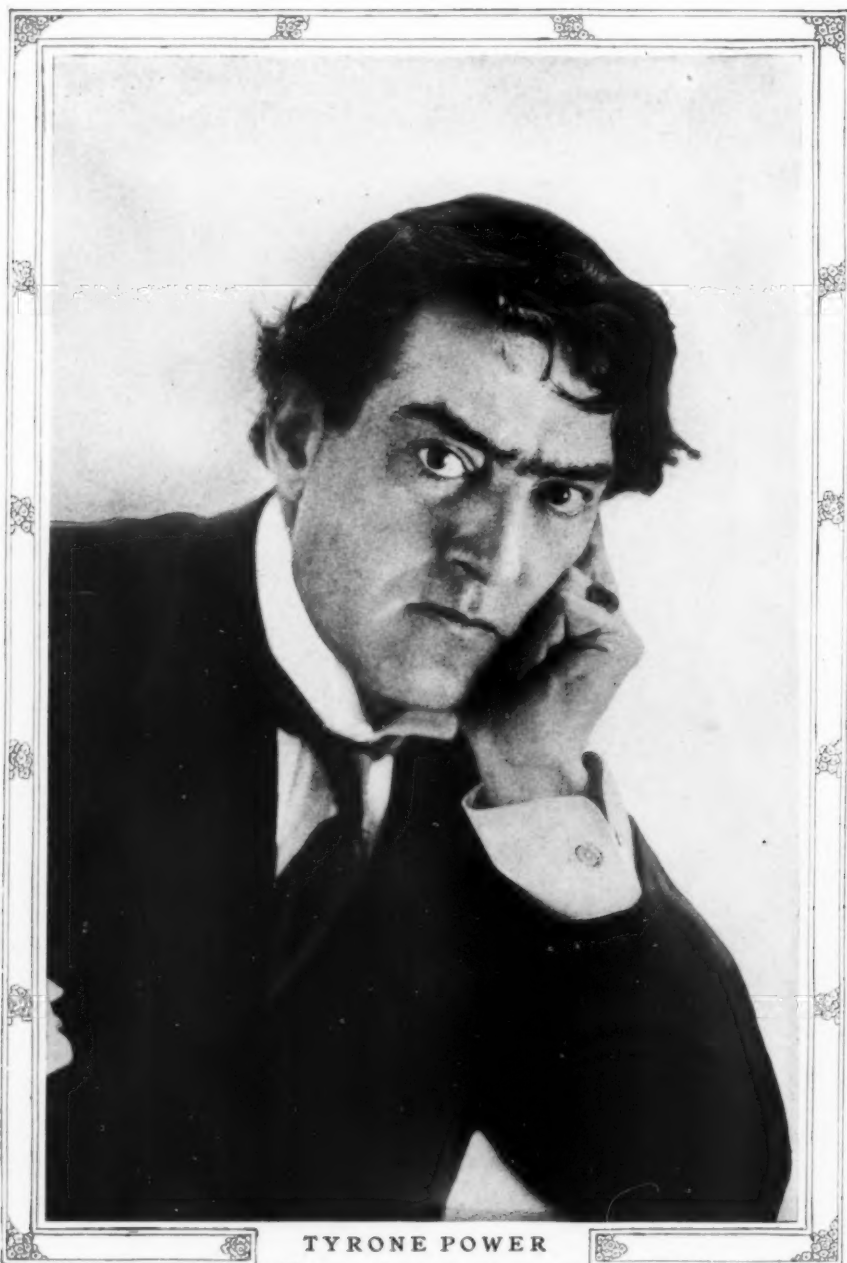
Photograph by Benjamin, Cincinnati



**JOHN E. DODSON**

J. E. Dodson was born in London in 1857. His first appearance was made in Manchester in 1877, supporting J. L. Toole. Later he supported Joseph Jefferson and J. K. Emmett during their English tours. In 1889 he joined Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and came with them to this country, making his first appearance here that year at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, in "A Scrap of Paper." He remained with the Kendals five years. In 1895 he was engaged by Charles Frohman as principal comedian of the Empire Theatre. Later he has appeared in "Under the Red Robe," "Ben Hur," "Prince of India," and "The Truth." Last year he toured the country under the management of Cohan & Harris in "The House Next Door."

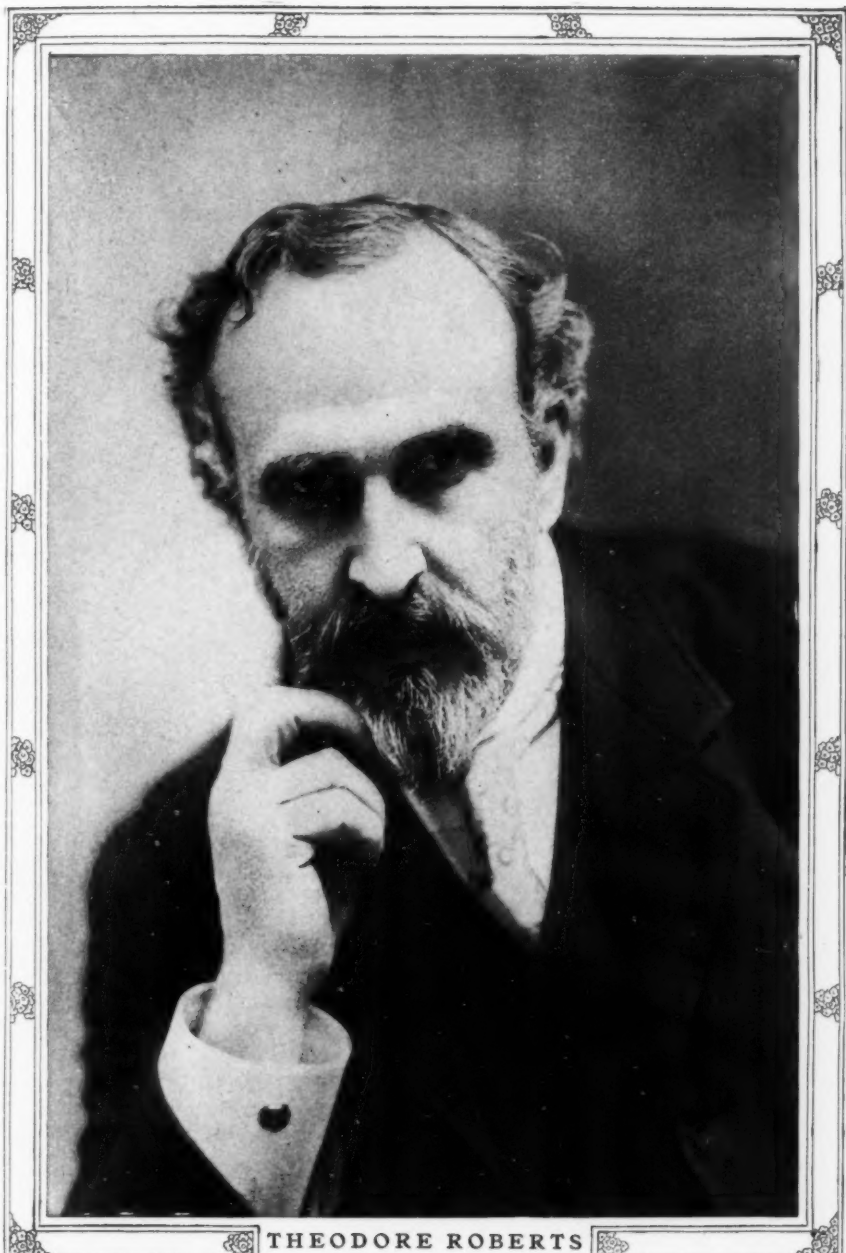
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago



**TYRONE POWER**

He was born in London in 1869. His first professional appearance was made in 1886 in St. Augustine, Fla., in "The Private Secretary." Later he supported Mme. Janaushek and presently joined Augustus Daly's company. After ten years with Daly, Mr. Power starred in Australia and later played in London with Sir Henry Irving. In 1902 he played *Judas Iscariot* in Mrs. Fiske's production of "Mary of Magdala." Later he was starred by Charles Frohman in Stephen Phillips' "Ulysses," and still later supported Mrs. Leslie Carter in "Adrea." In 1907 he appeared with Miss Henrietta Crossman in "The Christian Pilgrim," and next season made the success of his career as the *Drainman* in "The Servant in the House."

Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago



THEODORE ROBERTS

Mr. Roberts was born in San Francisco in 1861, where he made his first professional appearance with James O'Neill in "Richelieu." After a season with Robson and Crane he toured as a barnstormer in California, became disgusted and for two years mastered his own schooner on the Pacific. From 1888 to 1893 he was Fanny Davenport's leading man. His first Indian part was *Sky Erow* in "The Girl I Left Behind Me," since which he has played a round of wonderful Indian parts, notably *Tobywanda* in "The Squaw Man." In 1907 he joined forces with Guy Standing, playing *Joe Portugais* in "The Right of Way" and has later been seen with Mr. Standing in a dramatization of "The Barrier," by Rex Beach.

Photograph by Hall, New York



ROBERT EDESON

He was born in New Orleans in 1868, but was educated in Brooklyn, where in 1886 he became assistant treasurer of the Park Theatre. His first appearance was made the following year with Cora Tanner in "Fascination." In 1892 he became a member of Charles Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre Company. In 1894 he joined Charles Frohman's Empire Theatre Company. Mr. Edeson became a star in a dramatization of Richard Harding Davis' novel, "Soldiers of Fortune." Later starring vehicles have been "Ranson's Folly" and "Strongheart." For two years he appeared in "Classmates" with great success. Last year he was seen in "The Noble Spaniard" and this season will appear in "Where The Trail Divides."

Photograph by Hall, New York





RICHARD BENNETT

Mr. Bennett was born in Indiana thirty-seven years ago, and as a lad went to school in Logansport. Becoming "stage struck" he went to Chicago and secured an engagement in "The Limited Mail." For several years thereafter he was with various touring drama and melodrama organizations. Thirteen years ago he enlisted under Charles Frohman's banner and has remained there ever since. His first success was made as *Achille* in "The Proper Caper." Since then he has played in America and England in "The White Heather," "White House Tavern," "The Royal Family," "Jim Bludso," "The Other Girl," "The Lion and the Mouse," "The Hypocrites," "Peter Pan," and "What Every Woman Knows."

Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago



**GEORGE D. FAWCETT**

George D. Fawcett was born in Virginia in 1861. At eighteen he entered the University of Virginia and remained four years. It was his intention to enter business, but the call of the stage was too insistent, and at twenty-five he became a member of a touring company. Later he operated stock companies, notably in Baltimore, with great success. Two years ago he was selected to act the role of *John Ganton* in a dramatization of the novel "The Great John Ganton." His success was immediate and a season in the role followed. Mr. Fawcett is promised a new play for the coming season. In 1895 Mr. Fawcett married Miss Percy Haswell, and they have since been seen frequently in opposite roles.

Photograph by White, New York.



**FRANK KEENAN**

Mr. Keenan was born in 1858 in Dubuque, Iowa, but as a baby was taken to Boston by his parents. His first theatrical appearance was as an amateur in Boston in 1876. Although he started out as a traveling salesman he deserted his job to become an actor and joined a repertoire company in Maine. Later he appeared with Joseph Proctor and J. W. Lonergan. Followed engagements with Sol Smith Russell, the Boston Museum Company, James A. Herne, the Hoyt forces, and The Pike Company, of Cincinnati. After two years of starring in Sol Smith Russell's plays and two years in vaudeville, four years with Belasco followed. Latterly Mr. Keenan starred in "On the Heights."

Photograph by White Studio, New York



GEORGE ARLISS

He was born in England 44 years ago and began his dramatic experiences in provincial theatres and companies. It was his and her good fortune that Mrs. Patrick Campbell engaged him for her American tour of 1901-2 in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith." Mr. Belasco persuaded Mr. Arliss to stay in America, and under his management he played *Takuri* in "The Darling of the Gods" with great success. In 1904-5 Mr. Arliss joined Mrs. Fiske's company, in "Becky Sharp," "Leah Kleshna," "The Rose," "The Eyes of the Heart" and "The New York Idea." Later he was seen in "The Devil" and a dramatization of W. J. Locke's "Septimus." Last season he starred in "When Two Write History."

Photograph by Otto Sarony, New York



ARNOLD DALY

Mr. Daly was born in Brooklyn in 1875; first theatrical employment was call boy at Lyceum Theatre, New York; first part was in support of Fanny Rice; after a run of minor roles he made a hit as *Chambers* in "Puddin'-head Wilson." Later he was seen in "Because She Loved Him So," "Barbara Frietchie," "When We Were Twenty-One," and "Secret Service." In 1903 he produced Bernard Shaw's "Candida" and a repertoire of Shaw's plays resulted—"The Man of Destiny," "How She Lied to Her Husband," "John Bull's Other Island" and "You Never Can Tell." In 1907 Mr. Daly was at the head of his so-called "Theatre of Ideas." Later he was seen in "Regeneration," and at end of the past season in vaudeville.

Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago





**TULLY MARSHALL**

Mr. Marshall, at the age of thirty-nine finds himself, after a career identified with the theatre as actor, press agent, dramatic author, and stage director, one of the most talked of players on the American stage. This despite the fact that five years ago, hopeless of achieving recognition he all but determined to embark in a business enterprise. Then he was engaged to play *Joe Brooks* in "Paid In Full." After a brief Canadian tour the play was brought to New York. The next morning the long hoped for recognition came. Last season was produced Clyde Fitch's "The City," in which Mr. Marshall appeared with great success as the drug fiend *Hannock*. Mr. Marshall will appear as *Hannock* indefinitely.

Photograph by White, New York



JOHN BARRYMORE

John Barrymore, now thirty-two years of age, became an actor by inheritance. His family is one of the most famous associated with the American theatre in our time. His sister Ethel has achieved a secure place in the affection of the public; his brother Lionel is perhaps rather less known, and John has established himself as one of our foremost light comedians. He will be recalled for his amusing characterization of the wireless operator with William Collier in "The Dictator" and for his performance with his sister in "Alice Sit By The Fire." Later he appeared in "The Boys of Company B" and "A Stubborn Cinderella." For the past year he has acted the role of *Nat Duncan* in "The Fortune Hunter."

Photograph by White Studio, New York



WILLIAM THOMAS HODGE

"The Man From Home" was born in Alvion, N. Y., in 1874. After brief schooling in Rochester, N. Y., "Will," as he was called, joined the company of his brother—the Hill Repertoire Company. In 1900 Mr. Hodge fared forth to Broadway. He found a part with the Rogers Brothers in "The Reign of Error," and later was engaged by James A. Herne to play *Freeman Whitmarsh* in "Sag Harbor." Three years later he played in "Sky Farm." In 1902 he was engaged by Liebler & Co. to create *Hiram Stubben* in "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch." A year later he produced his own play—"18 Miles From Home," but it failed, and after a year in Weber's Theatre, New York, he was engaged to play "The Man From Home."

Photograph by White Studio, New York